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TRIMNELL**

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HURRY UP, YOU!

THESE THINGS ARE HEAVY

ONE MORE BOX, PETE



HEAVE TO!

SO! IT WAS A PLANT! DUMP THOSE PLATES!

HOLD IT! I'M TAKING OVER NOW!



LATER

TRAP WORKED. COUNTERFEITERS LED ME TO CACHE. BOTH CAPTURED, ALONG WITH PLATES. BELL

I'LL BE GLAD TO SHED THIS BEACHCOMBER RIG. CAN I CLEAN UP HERE?

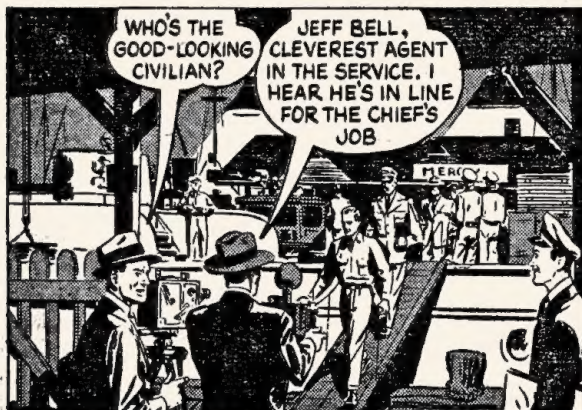


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MARCH, 1950

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*Cover painted for Adventure by Charles Dye
Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor*

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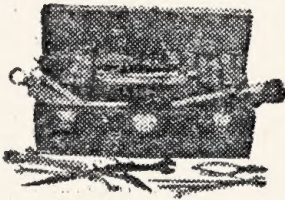
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Will any former member of the Adventure Pen Club please write Frank G. Babylon, 2055 Dartmore St., Pittsburgh 10, Penna.

I am trying to find my father, Noble H. McGinnis. When last heard of he was operating a funeral home somewhere in Okla. Pvt. Wm. H. McGinnis, RA 26964691, 111th Engr. Supply Co. Apo 942 c/o PM, Seattle, Washington.

Will anyone knowing George W. Spiegelberg, please ask him to get in touch with me? I think his home is in New York City. Carlos M. Diaz, M. Calle 29th, No. 1809, Chihuahua, Chih, Mexico.

Veterans who served at Dutch Harbor are planning a reunion in Chicago in 1950. We are eager to hear from Naval and Marine personnel who served at N.O.B., N.A.S., and N.A.F. from 1941 to the fall of 1945. Write J. Matthews, 5321 North Ashland, Chicago 40, Ill.

Would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing the whereabouts of Walter Coppinger, stationed in Panama around the time of the first World War. He was discharged from the Army at Fort Benning, Ga. Please notify James Corrigan, 1225 Bloomfield St., Hoboken, N. J.

Sister and nephew of Melvin P. Verschneider would like to hear from anyone knowing his present address. He has not been heard from in five years. He is 53 years old, an expert auto mechanic and his last known address was 21 Evergreen St., Cortland, N. Y. Send information to nephew, Harry Farrar, c/o D. Pitale, 32 So. Conn. Ave., Atlantic City, N. J.

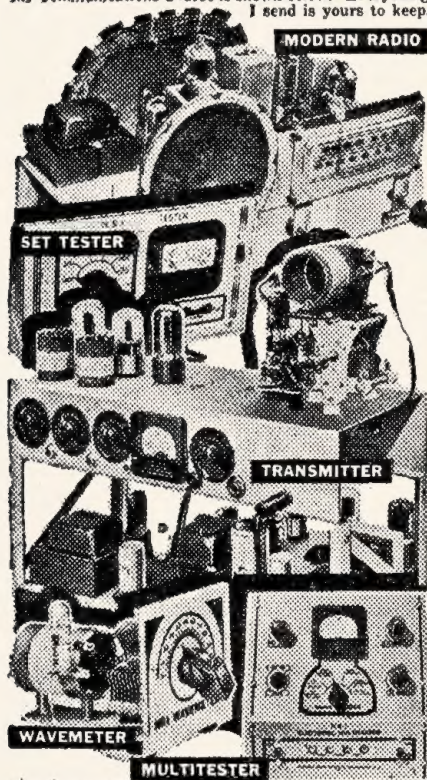
Would like information of Army buddies' whereabouts: John Kowal, Hamtramck, Mich.; Harry Gottfried, Chicago; John Tyson, N. Y. C. All of the 31st MRC (ETO) last seen in Chantilly. Also Emil de Roseby, 29th Inf. Div., last seen near Frankfurt A/M. Write John F. Laughlin, 4719 N. Cicero Ave., Chicago 30, Ill.

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THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

JUST about a year ago, or maybe a little longer, a very likable young chap dropped into this office and we had an interesting gabfest with him. He was just passing through New York—he'd been living in Mexico—and was now, he casually remarked, "headed for Casablanca to do some writing." He said he hoped to come up with a yarn that might be down *Adventure's* alley... That was Bob Trimnell, author of "The Sword of Mulai Ismail"—the novelette which leads off this issue—and we leave it to you whether he rolled one right down the middle of our alley or not.

Tangier, that Moroccan hotspot where Africa meets Europe, seems like a natural setting for a story of intrigue and adventure. Frank Kramer, the artist who illustrated the story so effectively, said he got a real kick out of doing the pictures—and we hope you'll get the same kick out of reading the yarn. Incidentally, Trimnell's main character, Jake Crawford, is not entirely fictional, as the author explains below.

Often, it seems, a writer takes a character from real life, but by the time the story is done, he has almost forgotten the prototype.

The inspiration for Jake Crawford would be hard to forget, though somehow he slipped out of "The Sword" as soon as Jake really got moving. I met him in a fishermen's bar in Fedala, French Morocco. He was a Yugoslav by birth, six feet four and rangy, with a grin a foot wide and hands that a tall glass of pastis seemed to disappear into. He'd been in the Legion, even the dreaded Bat D'Af, and showed me the cards to prove it. He had lots of cards. He proved he was licensed to hunt wild boars, to captain a sardine vessel, to drive a truck, and, I suppose, one that showed he was a member of the chamber of commerce.

For he was a booster. He reminded you of a Texan when he spread those huge arms and said, "It's big, Morocco! Big! It's got everything. Gold, fish, farms, ranches, oil, everything!"

He was right. Morocco has all that. It is boom country today, a great new frontier. But it is also the land of Mulai Ismail, and the people among whom Jake Crawford moves. It is only forty years ago that the French took over the decaying Sherifien Empire. Corruption, incessant civil war, and violent death had ruled. France "paci-

(Continued on page 120)

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The latticework above let the full moonlight flood the street with a queer broken light in which burnoused and sheeted figures moved as in a dream . . . And suddenly Jake heard the squeaking shoes.

THE SWORD OF MULAI ISMAIL

A Tale of Intrigue in Morocco



The latticework above let the full moonlight flood the street with a queer broken light in which burnoosed and sheeted figures moved as in a dream . . . And suddenly Jake heard the squeaking shoes.

By ROBERT L. TRIMNELL



THE morning sun burnt down into the Zocco Chico. Arabs hurrying through the square shook their shoulders and laughed, as though to throw off the night's cold. A burro clattered out of an alley, blinked in the unexpected light. His master pounded his ribs with a stick. The burro braced his tiny hoofs on the slanting, time-smoothed stone of the Zocco and clattered through the crowd.

From behind the burro came a tall,

big-boned man in baggy tweeds. The sun glinted off the red hair that stuck out under his soft gray felt hat. Like the burro, he stopped for a moment and blinked in the sunlight.

Jake Crawford was the name he went by, and his nationality, American. Indeed, some in the Zocco Chico whispered that his name really *was* Crawford. However, the matter rested there. It was not considered proper in the Zocco to inquire into such matters.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KBAMER

MULAI ISMAIL

By ROBERT L. TRIMNELL



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ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

Jake glanced around the little square. Six alleys fed into it. Five open-air cafes formed its sides. The foremost tables at the cafes were so close to the street that one's feet rested on the curb. The street itself was for walking. No automobiles could pass through the alleys.

Such was the Zocco Chico, the heart of the Medina of Tangier.

But the Zocco did not interest Jake Crawford at this moment. It was eyes. The four types of eyes found in the Zocco Chico.

There were black eyes under red flower-pot fezzes. They were opaque orbs, used by the Moors, or Arabs, as both peephole and mask. And then there were brown eyes under black, turned-down hat brims, deeply shadowed and blurred with suspicion. Those were Spanish eyes, worn with gaudy green and blue neckties and shiny black suits. Third, there were eyes that were brown smudges behind smoked glasses. "European" was the term used. They went with flannel and gabardine suits, sometimes of a gentleman's cut.

Those three kinds of eyes crowded the square even at this early hour. They flicked about, searching for what was romantically termed "business" in the Zocco Chico.

There was another set of eyes present. They did not move about nervously, nor were they hidden. They were hard, green, flat as a becalmed sea. They could be angry as the sea, too, and then they froze into green marble, and the wide, bony chin beneath jutted out like a ship's prow.

Those were Jake Crawford's eyes. He used them now, sweeping around the five cafes, challenging every set of smoked glasses, cutting beneath the lowered hat brims. Jake's own hat brim was turned up. He had nothing to hide. That was his racket.

The sweetest racket in Tangier, they said. All these denizens of the Zocco envied him; the smugglers and gun runners, the I.D.B.'s, and snow merchants, the plain thieves and pickpockets and procurers, the hooked-knife assassins and the blackmail brokers.

His eyes raked them all carefully. Furtively, they looked back at him. As always, he was inviting them to smash his racket. They could explode his graft with

a pinprick. But none accepted the challenge.

Jake ran the unheard-of racket of *honesty*. He was the only honest man in the Tangier underworld.



HE WALKED slowly, almost stiff-legged, across the Zocco to the Grand Cafe de France, and took a wrought-iron chair next to a small round marble-topped table. A waiter in a rumpled tuxedo came out of the cafe, set two saucers on Jake's table. On one was a small glass, and the other sparkled with sugar. An Arab boy followed with a tarnished silver pot in each hand. He poured mosca coffee, black and gummy, from one pitcher into the glass, then covered it with pale-blue milk. Jake dumped the sugar in and began to sip what passed for *cafe-au-lait* in Tangier.

A small man in a shiny brown suit hurried into the Zocco. He glanced once around it, peering anxiously with soft, doe-like eyes. He was brown-faced, young, with the Arab's hooked nose and curly black hair. In Tangier, where Africa met Europe, his was a common-enough type. An Arab gone European. His name was Djallah ben Fadji.

His eyes caught Crawford's. He hurried flat-footed to the American's table. "Mu'amm'd," he grinned.

"Mu'amm'd," Jake grunted back at him. The little man slid into the chair on the other side of the table. His brown eyes lit on the pack of cigarettes Crawford had laid out. He jerked one out of the pack and pulled a silvered lighter from his pocket. Crawford leaned over and lit his own cigarette from it.

"D'jabed farr—" began the little man. "Speak English," Crawford said. "I've got a head. Too much rum last night, while Reyes cheated me."

"Twenty thousand, I heard you lost. You're crazy to play with Juan Reyes giving cards. Why do you play with him? Reyes don't give cards unless he has a finger under the deck."

Crawford grinned. "Last night I made him lay the deck on the table and take each card separately off the top. I stopped him from marking them with his fingernail. I bought three new decks." He

glanced into the fluid brown eyes of Djallah. "It's his business to win." He dragged deep off his cigarette. "You got business?"

"Oh, I just wanted to talk to you. I thought maybe you could use some money. *Quand on a le mal chance—*"

"Give me a thousand." Crawford gulped down his coffee and stood up, stretching. The Arab took a kidskin wallet from his coat, extracted a brown thousand-peseta bill. Crawford jammed it into his pocket. "Where you want to talk?"

"Just follow." He hurried into one of the six alleys that led off the Zocco Chico. The street dipped sharply, narrowed. A projecting second story roofed it over for a space. A couple of dirty-faced Arab children jumped out of the way.

"What's the deal?" Crawford said.

"Oh, you will meet someone." The Arab scooted along, his soft brown eyes roving incessantly. Jake trusted the Arab—to a certain extent. Djallah ben Fadj was a *correedor*, a runner, one might say. He could be trusted to carry messages, to secure information. He could never be told a secret. He knew everyone in the Tangier underworld. Indeed, he knew what every one of them was doing this morning. He knew of the latest arrivals at Madame Flouchery's house in the Casbah, where they had come from, and who had procured them. He knew why the police found Pepe Armindez with a knife handle protruding from his back just the other night. He knew, and for a small fee he would tell. Some day he would tell too much. Perhaps that is why his brown eyes danced over every sunken doorway, every quick twist in the narrow alleys.



IN A tiny square they came to a dingy cafe, dignified by the name of Grand Bar de los Toreros. Djallah led the American in. It was not clean; a dusty bull-fighter's muleta hung over the bar and pinned to it was a photo of the great Manolete, edged with black crepe. They sat at a small table and Crawford wiped the grease from the glass that was set before him. A waiter brought sour white wine.

In a few minutes a heavy-bodied man entered the bar, glanced once at Crawford,

and moved up to the table. Without formalities, he slumped into a chair. He was bald, with large pale blue eyes and pink complexion. His suit was tourist Palm Beach, but not tourist clean.

Crawford shoved to his feet. "I didn't come half across the Medina to see you, Manly."

The man grinned, showing gold-capped teeth. "Sit down, sit down, I got a good thing." He waved a hand at the waiter, made a circle of the table with his finger. "I got a good thing, Jakey."

Crawford ignored him. He took his thousand-peseta note to the bar, paid for the drinks and stood waiting for his change. He stared out at the alley, at the shafts of light that lanced down into it. Manly lunged up out of his seat and lumbered over beside him.

"Now, don't be that way. Maybe I got a few businesses that ain't so nice, but who hasn't?"

Crawford stared past him at the sunlit alley.

The man tried to smile again, but gave it up. His face darkened and he spoke through tight lips. "All right, Crawford." His voice faded to a whisper. "Maybe the Spics would like to know about a trawler loaded with Enfields, eh? Cases of ammunition blew the bottom out of her." His face went ugly as he moved closer. "Maybe a sea captain that took Franco's pesetas while he was working—"

His mouth clapped shut. A big bronzed hand was twisting his shirt. Cold green eyes bit into his face. The hand kept twisting. Cloth ripped sharply.

"Who told you that?"

Manly tried to smile. He saw there was fear in the American's eyes and he tried to press his advantage. "Let me go, Jake. You don't want people to hear—"

Crawford heaved him away. The heavy man crashed into the door. He straightened, eyes flaming. His hand crept toward a coat pocket.

"Leave that," Crawford snapped. He walked over to the table again and sat down. He lit a cigarette with a hurried motion and jolted down the glass of wine.

Smiling, smoothing his rumpled suit, Manly sat opposite him.

"What's the business?" Jake said wearily.

Manly laughed and showed the gold-capped teeth. "Oh, it calls for a man that can be trusted."

Jake's mouth twisted as he stared into the other's pale pink face. "Trusted to cash in his reputation?"

Manly laughed again. "A damn lot your reputation would mean if they heard about the trawler—"

"Quiet! What's the proposition?"

Manly nodded toward Djallah. "I don't want it talked around."

Jake signaled to the Arab. His soft brown eyes blinked as he moved from the table, climbed up on a bar stool and ordered another drink.

Manly leaned forward, clasping his thick fingers together. "It's real easy, see? And maybe—maybe a hundred thousand Sterling for each of us! Near a half million dollars, Jakey!"

Resigned, Crawford leaned back in his chair, smoking slowly. "Women? Rocks? Hashish?"

Manly took a toothpick from his pocket and began probing among the gold caps. "I told you I got a good thing. No, none of the usual." He leaned back in his chair, faced Crawford with the gold grin outlining his teeth. "I wondered a long time, Jakey. Why you stayed in this pirates' nest." He picked up his glass of wine and rubbed it between his palms.

Jake raised one eyebrow until it arched up almost to his red hair. "Now you know," he said.

Manly ignored the raised eyebrow, though he knew it was a danger signal. "Maybe you stayed, Jakey, because there's other places that ain't so safe. But you got a good racket, too. It's a good act. Honest Jake Crawford."

The eyebrow stayed up and Jake's teeth showed whitely for a moment. "Maybe it isn't an act."

Manly set the glass of wine down and leaned forward. "Don't tell me that, Jakey. Maybe the Spics and Arabs here think that, but I'm an American too. Don't give me that. I know a good act when I see it. If it wasn't a act there wouldn't be the trawler, and—"

The eyebrows curved higher and Jake's eyes froze into glittering green marble. The plump man's voice sagged and died.

He took a small card from the pocket of

his coat and slid it across the table, only the bare white back of it showing. "It's a photo, Jakey. Look at it in private." Jake dropped it into his pocket and leaned back in his chair, regarding the man intently. Manly's watery blue eyes couldn't meet his, and they dropped to his glass again. "Jakey, you ever think of leaving this filthy town behind? Sure, you got a good graft, but listen, leaving with a hundred thousand Sterling in your jeans?"

Jake's eyebrows rose again. "You're tired of blackmailing me. Now you want to buy me."

The plump man's cheeks sagged. "I don't like blackmail, Jakey, it's dangerous. I'd rather buy you in as partner. Ever think, Jakey? For a hundred thousand you can buy yourself a banana republic." He leaned forward and his gold teeth glittered. He almost gasped out the words. "Build a palace in the mountains! I been there, Jakey. Central America. There's a swarm of half-white girls the Spics spawned. Honey-color skin, all for yourself!"

Crawford glanced at the man's heavy moist lips, hanging slackly open. Jake's own lip curled stiffly. But he said, "And you figure my honesty for a business asset, eh, Manly? Ready to be sold off if the bid is high enough?"

"I think so, Jakey," the plump man said, probing among the gold caps. "What do you think?"

Jake stood up. Suddenly he shrugged. Maybe the truth of it was that he didn't know himself.

CHAPTER II

TROUBLE IN TANGIER



JAKE entered the Zocco Chico that evening with an angry stiffness in his shoulders, his green eyes slitted down. He took the same table as that morning, ordered brandy, and slouched down into the iron chair.

He had reason to be angry. He was being followed.

Not that it was the first time. His business involved jobs like taking gold to Melilla. If some Arab street cleaner noticed a certain heaviness in Jake's suitcase,

he might retail the information to one of the Zocco Chico "businessmen." Then, there might be troubles besides evading soldiers as he slipped over the frontier to the Spanish Zone. Tangier was like that.

Tangier could not be otherwise. It was based on the corruption of Morocco. It was the center of the old Barbary coast, whose business for centuries had been piracy. It was only twenty miles across the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain, where smugglers had been thought of as Robin Hoods for generations, and bandits were popular heroes. And through the Straits passed the commerce of the world, passing as it went to leave its vices in Tangier.

So Jake did not expect any business he entered to smell like a rose. But this affair with Manly was off to a bad start. First, the tides of war and the pursuing law had not washed up any dirtier wreck than Manly. Jake didn't know about his past, but his present was bad enough to smudge the cleanest slate. Then there was this shadow.

And the photograph. He took it out of his pocket now, for he had to burn it. He glared around the square at the "businessmen." He kept the picture well-cupped in his hand, and took a last glance at it.

It was a sword. A scimitar, a gleaming arc like a half-moon, photographed against black velvet. A blade curved the way the Arabs liked them when the Jihad, the Mohammedan Holy War, swept over half the world.

But Manly would not be interested in Holy Wars. It was the hilt, and the scabbard below the sword. Gold, studded with spirals of glittering gems, crusted

like the barnacles on a ship's bottom. Jake scratched a match on his thumb-nail and burned the picture, crumbled the ashes and threw them into the street. Angrily, he lit a cigarette and smoked it in quick puffs.

His eye caught a swift movement, a small man scooting into the square. Djallah. The Arab-turned-European hurried up to his table and slid into a seat.

"More business?" Jake said.

The Arab did not answer. He took Jake's brandy glass and emptied it at a gulp. When he set the glass down it rattled on the marble table top. Jake raised an eyebrow. The little man's face was as white as the table.

"What's the trouble, Ben?" Crawford said.

"Trouble?" He looked up. "No trouble."

Jake shrugged. "O.K., no trouble." But he could feel the trouble himself. The Arab puffed jerkily on a cigarette he had sniped from Jake. Jake looked around. People were staring at the two of them. He growled. That was his imagination running away with him. In the Zocco they always stared, hoping to pick up a ragtag of information that could be sold for a few pesetas. There were people who bought scraps of stories about everything that went on in the Medina. They fitted them together. Usually, what came out of it was blackmail. Jake glared around the square. Eyes flickered. The dead stare of dark glasses peered back at him. Smoked glasses at night—like eye sockets in dusky skulls.

Djallah had a brown hand cupped over the end of his cigarette. He spoke into it.

MAN FROM MISSOURI ASKED TO BE SHOWN!



**And He Was!
Carl W. Rau Has
Now Switched to
Calvert Because
it Tastes Better.**

ST. LOUIS, MO.—Carl W. Rau, Missouri chemical engineer, is no longer a skeptic about the big switch to Calvert. "Friends showed me," he said. "Calvert really does taste better, really is smoother any way you drink it."

"Rue de Seville, Number Eight," he muttered. Then he flipped the cigarette out into the street, as though to distract attention. The spark wobbled through the semi-darkness.

"Manly?" Jake growled. "Damn, Ben, I swear—"

The Arab laughed nervously. "You don't even trust an American?"

Jake smiled at that. "I trust lots of people, but not in Tangier. Who am I going to see?"

"A Moorish man. He has some work for you."

"The devil." Jake pushed up out of his chair. "Meet me at Juan Reyes's." He strode off across the Zocco, glancing contemptuously at the ring of faces that surrounded it. Their wavering glances flickered back at him. He wondered which one was his shadow. And he was going to find out.

He took a small alley, followed the first two twists. The alley split and he took the smaller street, one that sloped upward, so narrow that only two men could pass at a time. Five stories above, moonlight glinted on whitewashed stone. It reflected on the other side and lost itself in the murk below. That suited Jake. He would work in the dark tonight.

Again the alley split, in a ten-foot-square courtyard sprinkled with moonlight. At the opposite side was an open door. Jake stepped in and behind the door. He did it calmly. He had shaken the nervousness of a few minutes before, now that he was on the move. The doorway, he knew, was the entrance to a rabbit-warren of Arab houses. He stood in the corner, head bowed, hands in pockets, waiting and listening patiently.

The footsteps came into the courtyard, paused. He smiled. A fairly heavy man in squeaky Spanish shoes. The man let his breath burst out in disgust. He paced off to the left with long hurried movements.

Jake slipped out from behind the door. He followed the same alley his shadow had taken, pacing noiselessly on crepe soles. He took a heavy jack-knife from his pocket. Without opening it, he wrapped it tightly into his fist. A roll of nickels would be better. But this would do. The alley was almost pitch dark. Ahead, a to-

bacco store, a mere hole in the side of the street, threw a flickering carbide glow on the smoky wall opposite. The man passed it, walking hurriedly. Tall, Jake saw, and with heavy shoulders. Past the tobacco store, he stopped. Jake halted and flattened against the wall.

The quick clatter of leather soles came toward him, the squeak of cheap leather moving jerkily. There was a quiet murmur of Arabic from the gleam of the tobacco store. The man hurried on. Jake tightened his fist about the jack-knife. He was spread-eagled against the wall, every nerve drawn tight. Jake figured, for thirty seconds he'll be blinded by the carbide lamp.

Muttering under his breath, the man with the squeaky shoes walked into it. Jake pivoted out from the wall, leaned, wheeled his right fist hard.

It crunched. The shock of the blow jolted up into his shoulder. The man thumped down hard on his back and a leather heel rattled once.

Jake bent down over him. A hammer would have done it no better. The man was cold. Jake's brows twisted. He was not of the Medina. A long pale face, a tiny mustache. A knife scar marked his right jaw. That was all. A big, black-haired man with squeaky Spanish shoes. Jake stood up, scratching his chin, one eyebrow raised.

Slowly, Jake turned and walked toward Rue de Seville, Number Eight.



IT WAS one of a row of shops in an alley, boarded up for the night. Jake glanced both ways through the murk of the street. It was deathly quiet. He took a box of matches from his pocket. After opening it he raised a fist over the door to knock. Suddenly the door swung open.

"Entrez," a hoarse voice said out of the blackness.

Jake stepped in, ducking under the low doorway. He struck a match, closing his eyes for the moment that it flared. In case a scragging were in order, he hoped to startle those inside. When the whoosh of burning phosphorus was gone he flicked his eyes open.

Across the flame was a reddish-faced Arab in a blue turban. There were two



black holes in the middle of his face. Jake grunted and dropped the match.

The Arab had no nose.

Jake found his palms were wet. Not nice to look over a match at that. Chopping of noses used to be a legal punishment in Morocco.

"*Venez avec moi,*" the noseless man rasped. He closed the door and led Jake through the dark to another room. Jake was breathing hard.

The man knocked on a door and grunted hoarse Arabic syllables. A calm, well-modulated voice answered. He swung the door open.

The rich rank smell of raw hides flooded out. But something else that made Jake



The shock of the blow jolted up into his shoulder as the man thumped down hard on his back.

frown in disapproval. A thin thread of a less honest odor. Kiff, it was called by those Moors who preferred it to hashish and cocaine.

A tall Arab stood against the opposite wall. The room was decorated in the best Moorish taste. Reed mats and large shining brass trays, a tea kettle and brazier in the middle of the room. The room's austerity was a fitting complement to the man. Slender, in a fine gabardine burnoose and white silk turban. His face was lean as a hawk's, his nose bridged, his eyes beady and black. He held his head so high and stiff that he seemed paralyzed. The single concealed light did not give enough of a glow for Jake to tell if the kiff was showing in his eyes.

"*Muhammed*," the Moor said in a clear, clipped voice.

"*Mu'amm'd*," Jake replied, in the coarse dialect of the Tangier Moors. He noticed the other's way of speech, and the education that it implied.

The Moor signed for his noseless servant to leave. He began speaking rapidly in precise, bookish French.

"You may seat yourself, if you wish."

Jake sighed and sat down in front of the tea kettle. The other waited, then sat cross-legged across from him. He had the quiet dignity and angularity of a stork. He poured hot water into glasses half-full of mint and tea leaves.

"I am Ahmed ben Hadj."

Jake reflected on that. It didn't ring any bells. This man was not of the underworld. Rather, he appeared to be of the Arab "family" group, puritan, correct, teetotalers. Honorable, according to their lights. But a breed Jake did not like. Their terribly repressed emotions could make them the most dangerous of fanatics.

"Your honesty has been recommended to me," the Arab said, lifting his eyes from the glasses of tea and staring into Jake's face. "It is said that your word is like that of the God of the Jews; terrible in its exactness."

Jake was staring directly into the Arab's beady black orbs. Ahmed's chin rose a fraction in defense. Jake smiled. Those black eyes were slightly dilated. Ahmed's eyes could not take that stare, not with kiff clouding them. He looked down at his glass of tea.

"If you took duty with me, would your footsteps stray? If on one side there were a mountain of gold? And on the other side, the Ten Thousand Black-Eyed Houris of Heaven? Would you march on straight as the soul of a Believer—"

Jake had smiled at first. But he was always annoyed by the high-flung imagery the Arabs used. "Listen," he growled, "if there were an Arab in Tangier you could trust, you'd hire him. I come expensive. I don't prattle on about how honest I am, like you Moors and the Spaniards do. You talk about it so much it doesn't mean a damn thing. You know I'm the only man in this sink hole you can trust. I make my living that way. What's the business?"

Ahmed's chin rose, and his strong-boned face tightened. He seemed to sight down his nose at Jake. That was no good, because he had kiff in his eyes. Jake knew he was being too blunt for the oriental taste. But it was the only way. In his business a man had to keep things above the table if he wanted to survive.

"You do not seem to understand me," Ahmed said in a low voice. "You must undertake this without knowing what your duties will be. When you learn, you will wish—perhaps—that you were not so ready to agree."

Jake's eyes narrowed. He sipped the scalding tea. "Depends on how much you pay."

"For one week, fifty thousand pesetas."

That made it easy. Fifteen hundred dollars. Jake wasn't going blind on that. "Hire a Moor," he said.

"If I should tell you more?"

"If you tell me enough. It's plenty money for a week's work, if I know enough."

Ahmed ran a delicate fingertip around the rim of his glass. "I am a dealer in leather goods. You will go to the Red City, Marrakech, as my agent. The best sheepskins come from the High Atlas, and my brother in Marrakech—"

"Just hides?" Jake said.

"Perhaps something else. An object of great value, perhaps."

Jake smiled. It fitted in. Manly's sword?

"Interesting," he said. "Let's hear more."

"There is no more," Ahmed said, abrupt finality in his voice. "I will tell you no more."

"O.K. Five thousand dollars," Jake said flatly.

Ahmed showed no emotion. He rubbed a finger tip around the rim of his glass. Suddenly he smiled. As though with glee, he rubbed his hands together. He reached under his robe and pulled out a roll of bills.

"Will two thousand be sufficient to commence the assignment?" There was a merry, wicked light in his eyes, and he licked his lips feverishly.

Jake saw that. "Good enough," he said, reluctantly now, wondering if he should have set a blind price. He frowned and took the money.

Ahmed smiled broadly. "You have taken my money. You will carry out the mission as it will be outlined to you by my brother, Mustafa ben Hadj, in Marra-kech? In spite of everything?"

"I don't need that many words. I'll do the job."

"Ahh!" Ahmed said. He rubbed his hands together quickly. Jake started to rise.

The Arab held out a hand indicating that he should wait. "I am reminded of the Medieval European legend of Faust. The philosopher who sold his soul to the devil, in return for youth?"

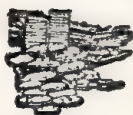
Jake nodded.

"Faust gained youth. You gain five thousand dollars. Ah, you say we Arabs and the Spaniards value our word so lowly that we talk about its value. *Mi palabra es mi honor*, as the Spaniards say. Now you will learn! No, I can not trust a Moor to do this. I can only trust a complete fool!"

Jake jammed the money into his pocket. Somehow, the odor of kiff was becoming stronger, and Ahmed's eyes were glowing brightly. He seemed to be at a high stage of ecstasy. Jake wanted to get out of there, fast.

Something was wrong and dirty here, very wrong and very dirty. The Arab's talk was lifting the hair on the back of his neck. Maybe it was like Faust talking to the devil.

Worse, because of the extras. Faust did not have Manly to deal with.



IT WAS curious that the most cosmopolitan city in the world should forbid gambling. Little is forbidden in Tangier; the international city tried its best to please the hundred races and nationalities that swarmed in its streets. Street signs were in French, Spanish, and Arabic, and the goods of the world moved freely, to please the varied tastes. But gambling was against the law, so Juan Reyes's establishment flourished, viciously. It was foolish to forbid anything at all in Tangier.

The doorman admitted Jake with a nod of greeting. He went on into the main room. It was long, low-ceilinged, with a mahogany bar at one end, three large poker tables, and doorways leading to two smaller rooms. From one came music and the shuffling of dancing feet. The other was for "business."

Jake sauntered to the center table, round, felt-topped, surrounded by eight poker players. It was the heavy-stakes table, presided over by Juan Reyes himself.

Reyes was an Andalusian, a lean swarthy man with a face like a knife. A green eye-shade half-hid his greasy black head. He saw Jake enter.

"*Como estas tu?*" he said. His smile was a thin V and his eyes crinkled at the corners, in the way of a man who likes to smile. Jake knew that Reyes liked to smile. It was the only expression he had, other than a wooden, tight-lipped mask. But Juan smiled at things that made other men turn away.

"*Bien. Y tu?*" Jake said flatly.

"*Pierdo.*" Again the V grin, the corners of his mouth slanting up at his ears.

"You never lose," Jake muttered. "Don't lie to me."

Juan returned to the game, smiling. Jake felt a hand touch his arm. It was the light nervous touch of Djallah. He turned. The little Arab's face was pale, his brown eyes flickering about. He was unsteady on his feet.

The Arab was a little drunk. Jake did not like that. Not when drunkenness was used to cover the stark fear that lodged in the man's eyes.

"Well, Ben?" Jake raised an eyebrow, disapprovingly. He rather liked the little man. If there were trouble, Ben would

need his wits a lot more than liquor. "Manly again," the little man said. His voice was shrill now. He led Jake hurriedly into the "business" room. Manly was at a table, gulping down a glass of brandy. He smiled his golden smile at Jake. He jerked a broad thumb toward the door when he looked at Djallah ben Fadj.

"*Vas-y*," he growled. Djallah's eyes went soft and mournful. He walked slowly toward the gaming room.

"Hello, Jakey," Manly said.

Jake slumped down in a chair and pulled a cigarette quickly from the pack, lit it with his eyes marble cold on Manly. He stared at the other's pouchy cheeks, at his wilted collar and the way the back of it showed, black and sweat marked.

"Aren't you glad to see me, Jakey? We're the only two Americans in the Medina, and we got to stick together, Jakey. We got things between us. A photograph and a trawler loaded with—"

He chopped his voice off and laughed as Jake's eyes froze.

"Now, Jakey! I get the tale like this. A trawler captain went down into the hold with a Mills bomb, Jakey. He pulled the ring out and laid it on top a box of ammunition, and when the boat started rolling out in heavy seas, the Mills bomb rolled off and sprung the trigger."

Jake stood up, smoking jerkily. "What you want is the photograph." He snapped the words out.

"Jakey, you're awful smart!" The gold teeth glinted.

Jake leaned over the table for a moment. "Juan Reyes is a blackmail broker?" He said it as a question, but knew there would be no answer. He glanced once more at Manly, turned and walked abruptly out into the gaming room. Djallah slid off a barstool and followed him out the front door, pushing past the doorman and into the alley.

It was narrow, faintly blotched with moonlight, winding toward the Zocco, a canyon through shallow doorways and shuttered windows.

"What's the trouble, Ben?"

The Arab glanced up at him and drew a hand nervously across his mouth. "They never gave me what I deserved," he whined. They started down the alley.

Jake shrugged. "Sure, you were born high and mighty. Educated at the Koran school in Fez, all that. Sure. Me, I was king of the world ten years ago. Sea captain at twenty-six." He walked with long stiff strides. Djallah paced hurriedly at his side, head down, following the twists of the alley mechanically. He knew every paving stone in that alley, in every alley in Tangier.

"That's all done with, Ben." Jake said it without harshness. "You know too much right now. You better spill it to—"

The squeak of a hinge rasped into him. As he looked up, a door was opening in the alley wall. A stumpy automatic pistol slid out, pointed at his face. Beyond the gun was blackness. Djallah saw it at the same moment.

"Ahh!" he grunted as his breath wheezed out.

For a moment Jake thought, stupid! They'd never shoot a man in the street! These walls and shutters that look so blank and dead, why, a shot would explode them open and a hundred faces would peer into the street.

From behind came the slapping of running feet. Bare, he thought. He heard Djallah gasp again, but this time it was more of a groan. He turned, and as his body twisted, a heavy form leaped on his back. He went down hard, his face mashing into stone.

But as he went down he saw Djallah was already on his face. And from his back protruded the big worked-silver handle of a knife. Djallah was writhing on the blade. The point of it scratched the stone. It would have made Jake sick, that impaled man, struggling in his death agonies and scratching that knife that skewered him on the stones. But something was pounding his own head, bruising his face into the street, and then there was no more light for him than for Djallah.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE OF THE DEAD



THE Moroccan railway system was some five hundred miles in length. It started at the sea, the nipple of land that protruded toward Spain and almost joined

two continents. That was Tangier. It followed the coastal plain through Rabat, Morocco's capital, and Casablanca, its metropolis. Then it cut inland and ended in view of the High Atlas. That was Marrakech.

It was a long trip, and Jake had time to think of other things than what he saw out the window; sheep on the gray-green hillsides, and glossy orange orchards as the train swooped down into the valleys, Arabs on camels and donkeys waiting at the grade crossings.

So did the two middle-aged Frenchwomen who sat facing him in the compartment. They stared at the big black bruise on his cheek and his torn lip, and made a decision that stiffened their backs and sent their gazes stonily beyond him. He was a common barroom brawler, they thought.

He grunted and settled his felt hat lightly on the bulging bruise on the back of his head. They could think what they wanted.

He lit a cigarette and stared out the window, trying to make the lub-a-lub-a-lub of the train wheels drum his mind into a stupor, so that he would not think of last night. But the pain in the back of his head was there to remind him of it. He could not forget how he had staggered to his feet and stared down at Djallah, his twisted body a splotch in the poor light, the blood slightly silvered by the flecks of moonlight that found the bottom of the alley.

"Poor, futile little man," he had said aloud. He had looked around the alley, seeing fuzzily. He was alone. The door that had been opened before him was

closed. Beyond would be only a courtyard, with a hundred places for a man with a snub-nosed automatic and his knife partner to escape to.

He wondered why Djallah had been knifed, and why he was only struck with some blunt instrument. As a warning? Were the stakes big enough that a man could be killed just to warn him? He shuddered. No time now to worry about that.

He had looked down at the worked-silver handle protruding from the *corredor's* back. That would have to go. Make it look like a wallet murder. The knife was too valuable for such a killer to leave behind. He grabbed the hilt, jerked it out quickly. He breathed out sharply, wiped it on the Arab's coat. He took out the dead man's wallet, extracted the money and dropped the empty leather.

"You poor son of a—" In spite of Djallah's failings, he had liked him. He grunted and paced off down the street.

The contents of Djallah's wallet had gone into the alms-box at the Mosque. The dagger he had thrown out far into the harbor . . .

"*M'sieu!*" It was one of the French women talking. The intimacy of French railway compartments overcame many things. Evidently she had chosen for the moment to forget that he was a barroom brawler.

"Is it true, *m'sieu*, that traveling in Morocco can be—dangerous?"

He looked at her stiff, unattractive body, her stern flat face. Not to her, he thought. Neither her little bit of money nor her body would invite trouble. He said, "There are thieves. If you have a lot of

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money, something might happen to you."

He looked out the window again. Like a dirty cumulus cloud, a flock of sheep moved over a rocky hill. Peaceful. A shepherd leaned on his crook and watched the train pound by. He waved and grinned and took off his turban and wiped his shaved, sweating head with it.

Djallah's killer could have been such a man as he, Jake thought. To all appearances, a peaceful shepherd who spent his days on the rocky Spanish Moroccan hillsides. But when the soldiers came to count those sheep, and tax them—there would be a Mauser rifle in his hut, and the soldiers had best make a light count.

It was like that, he thought. Subtle and hidden. Until you got to Marrakech where the naked ugly heart of Morocco was laid bare on the desert floor. Where nobody denied the heritage of Morocco. Where they remembered countless bloody wars, stretching back to the armies of the Prophet a thousand years before. How the green banner snapped and crackled across the plains, the curved scimitars slashing, black eyes glittering with maniacal delight. Victory! Victory or death that was life with the Ten Thousand Houris of Heaven!

And now, French and Spanish soldiers held the peace. Held it with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets.

"*M'sieu.*"

It was the Frenchwoman again. Jake turned from the blazing sunshine to the musty green plush of the compartment.

"Have you any idea what this photograph means? Perhaps you know Morocco?"

Jake jerked bolt upright. The woman was holding a card in her hand, and on it was the picture of the sword!

"It was lying on the seat when we entered the compartment," she said.

Jake looked at her. Her face was blank with dull respectability. No, it was no plant. She was innocent of it. She had just found a card on the seat. Maybe she had.

"Pardon, *Madame*," he said stiffly. "I have never been in Morocco before."

And as he thought of Djallah's skewered body, of the Mauser rifle that the shepherd on the hillside undoubtedly had hidden, he wished it were true.



WHEN he climbed off the train in Marrakech, The Red City seemed to come out and meet him. Dusty heat seeped up out of the baked red ground. It filtered through his clothes and stole the sweat.

It was night. The desert dust hung like frail red gauze in the moonlight. The palms arched up suddenly out of the flat land.

Jake let the porter lead him to a horse-drawn fiacre. He swung up, threw his bag beside him and leaned back into the leather seat.

"*Vieux quartier*," he told the driver.

"*Ehhe!*" the Arab croaked to his horses. He lashed them and they jerked the fiacre out into the street, the iron-shod wheels grinding into the dust.

The station lay in the Nouvelle Ville, the European Quarter, but even there you could see and hear and feel Marrakech. The European Quarter scarcely intruded. The French might paint their stucco houses green, but in a year they were red, the dull red of the old city. And they could not keep out the drums.

Their throbbing reached even to the suburbs. Jake heard it and felt his heart leap ahead a beat to keep in time with them. They were from the Djemaa el Fna, the center of Marrakech—the heart of Morocco. He had ordered the cab to go there. He knew Marrakech. You could not argue with the drums.

They were louder as the wheels ground out to the paved boulevard. Jake caught his breath, trying to breathe past the dust. There was a great open space. The palms looked stranger there, jerking up out of the flatness and standing absolutely still, leaves weighted with dust. It was nine months since the rain.

Jake lit a cigarette, leaning forward in the open carriage. You weren't normal in Marrakech, it seemed. Your heart raced with the drums. They were in some infernal fashion beaten just ahead of the heart. All night they increased their speed. Yet you moved slowly in the heat; you spoke quietly, profoundly.

The carriage trundled toward the great city gates. The two towers were built of red 'dobe brick. As a student of Morocco's gory history, Jake knew that was



"M'sieu will have his vermouth with the lady?" asked the Arab porter.

not the only ingredient. The Emperor Mulai Ismail had ordered thousands of freshly severed Christian heads thrown into the mortar.

They were through the gates then, and could hear the flutes. They wailed far apart from the drums, like spirits borne on the desert wind. Perhaps it was the flutes, Jake thought, that made you feel so quiet and profound, while the drums raced your heart within you.

Suddenly the fiacre was at the great square. The Place Djemaa el Fna, The Place of the Dead. Brutally the drums pounded. The square lay under a mantle of red dust, dust that flamed from the hundreds of kerosene torches and charcoal fires. There, cous-cous was roasted, men knotted together to hear the storytellers, and giant circles marked the dancers. They were dancing slowly now, for it was early evening.

Jake climbed out of the fiacre in front of the CTM hotel, a luxurious tourist trap at the edge of the great square. Porters were upon him. He shoved through the squealing mob that cadged for tourist tips and into the hotel.

"Room on the court," he told the desk

clerk, a fat Frenchman with glasses so thick he looked like an owl. "Some vermouth up on the viewing roof."

The Frenchman bowed slightly. His eyes flicked behind the glasses. Jake scowled. The man took his arrival calmly, as though it were the most natural thing in the world—which it was. Then why was the fat hand trembling on the desk top?

Jake turned and hurried up the stairs. He was getting jumpy, he told himself. Why worry about every porter and room clerk you see?

The second floor was a tile courtyard, ringed with potted palms and with rooms opening off it. The third was on the roof. He continued to the top.

On the tiled flat roof were round tables and chairs, pulled close to the parapet that faced the Djemaa el Fna. Jake strode to the edge and stood, hands in pockets, staring down.

Here you caught the full sound of the square. The drums, the flutes, the muffled roar of voices. Morocco boomed up at him. Here were the descendants of Mulai Ismail and his cohorts. The heirs of the days of the Barbary Pirates, when Mar-

rakech was capital of the terrible Sherifien Empire. When the loot of the Mediterranean streamed in from Rabat and Salee. Gold, gems, women, slaves, to toil and die for the pleasure of the fiendish emperor.

A voice came from behind. "*M'sieu* will have his vermouth with the lady?"

He turned. The Arab porter stood there with a tray balanced on one hand and two full glasses of wine on it. He indicated a table. In the gloom Jake saw only a girl seated there, a glimpse of long slender legs and a pale oval face. He nodded.

"If the lady should be pleased," he told the Arab.

The boy pulled a chair out for him, set the glasses on the table. Jake puckered his brow. A lonely woman was picking him up. Maybe that was it. He shrugged.

It was dark, but as he sat down he glimpsed her profile. Clean, with a straight nose, long slender neck and a chin that jutted strongly. She turned to him and smiled.

"Pardon, *M'sieu*. It is not every day that I take the liberty of inviting a man to have a drink with me." The smile faded away. It had not been a very comfortable smile anyway. "Here in Marrakech," she said, "perhaps you would not mind my intrusion."

Jake smiled back at her. He liked the sound of her voice, a deep huskiness that went well with the dust and throbbing drums. There was something in it of that same swelling rumble. But he knew his own voice was affected by the drums. He spoke slowly, and the drums supplied the rhythm.

He raised his glass. "*A votre santé, Madame.*"

"*Mademoiselle,*" she corrected.

"I was only being polite." He raised his glass again. "*A votre santé, Mam'selle.*"

She smiled slowly, raised her glass and clinked it to his. She sipped the vermouth, staring over the rim at him with large steady eyes.



JAKE took the cigarettes from his pocket. She accepted one. He was glad of the chance to hold the match close to her face. Her eyes were gray, her forehead

broad and high. Her hair was reddish, drawn to the back of her head. The eyebrows were thin penciled lines. Her complexion was a pinkish blush, creamy.

He realized then that she was finished lighting her cigarette and looking over the flame at him.

"My face interests you, *M'sieu?*" she said, peering out of the dark shadows the flame of the match threw into her face.

He lit his own cigarette and hurriedly flipped the match away. "Yes. I am wondering why a woman would shave her eyebrows, and why she would dye hair that was the color of Normandy cider. Your complexion and accent are North West of France, *Mam'selle.*"

She flicked her cigarette with a quick jerk. "You shouldn't ask questions like that!" Her voice became harsh. "Suppose I asked why you are in Marrakech?"

Jake frowned and leaned back in his chair. Now, a lonely tourist should assume that he was another tourist. If she had come only to hear the drums and see Marrakech—no. She was no tourist. He felt it. He puffed slowly on his cigarette.

"I think, *Mam'selle*, I am in Marrakech for the same reason as you."

She looked away, smoking the cigarette in quick puffs. She had not wanted that answer.

Jake leaned back in his chair, watching her. "I will call you Madeline, since all girls from Normandy seem to be called that. Or are you Bretonne? No matter. I am known as Jake Crawford."

His name did not seem to interest her. Either she knew it already, he thought, or, she was what she half-heartedly pretended to be. A lonely tourist. And Jake did not believe that.

"The drums," she said. "Perhaps that is better to talk about."

"No. They drive you crazy. Anything is better."

She seemed not to hear him. She leaned forward, elbows on knees and chin cupped in her hands. "Now they lull you. They grip you, inside. Then when they have you—about midnight, they race. In an hour—" She stood up and walked to the edge of the parapet. She had a slim, clean-lined figure. She turned suddenly. "They want me to jump on a horse and ride yelling out into all those people and cut them

up with a sword! Do you understand what I'm talking about?"

Jake laughed. "Exactly! The Jihad. Holy War. That's what the drums are for. Can you see a thousand of those hook-nosed, agate-eyed devils down there riding a thousand white horses, cloaks flying in the wind? Waving their curved scimitars—the green banner cracking like a whip—riding like fury, for they're the finest horsemen that ever lived! And you see, they win, for it is victory for them, or Death that is Life with the Ten Thousand Black-Eyed Houris of Heaven!"

She shivered, in spite of the night's heat. "Yes. I can see it."

The sound of her voice caught him like a hook. He shoved quickly to his feet.

"Yes? You say yes? And do you mean that—"

She sat down and grasped her glass of vermouth, held it tight. He saw she was struggling with herself. She burst out, "Marrakech is filled with those little photographs! Thousands of them. Soon they will be in Melilla, Casablanca, Fez, Tangier, Rabat. Photographs of a sword—"

"What sword?" Jake grasped her wrist.

"The sword of Mulai Ismail!...Do you know Moroccan history?"

Jake released her and sat down heavily. "Yes. Mulai Ismail was blood crazy. People laugh at the stories of his never killing less than one slave a day with his own hands. But his sword, the fabulous—" He stopped, remembering. Could this be the same sword? "It is buried over there, with him." He jerked a thumb

toward the great tombs of the Saladien princes, a few blocks away.

She gave him a long, steady look. The drums were pounding now, faster. Her eyes glowed. He could see her breasts rising and falling rapidly under the thin silk dress; even as the hooked drumsticks rose and fell.

Suddenly she uttered a long sigh that was half a groan. "Give me a cigarette, Crawford."

He gave it to her and watched as she took a lighter from her purse, and the flare brought the gently rounded pink planes of her face into relief.

"You should be in Normandy," he said. "Picking apples in the sunlight, or kneading that hard gingerbread they make, in front of an open fireplace."

She dropped the lighter into her bag and stood up. "And you should be on the bridge of your ship, Crawford." She walked to the stairway, quickly, a sharp clatter of high heels. "But I don't think you'll see a ship again. Good night, Crawford."

She was gone down the stairway. Jake stood staring out at the Djemaa el Fna. She should not know that he had been a sea captain. He had not told her, nor were his speech and actions those of a seaman. He had shaken that a long time ago.

She knew. And she fitted in. With Ahmed ben Hadj's five thousand dollars and the man with the squeaky shoes and Manly's dream of a banana republic, and Djallah's death.

He wished her cheeks were not so fair or her gray eyes so clear. Then he could hate her, as he did all the rest of it.



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CHAPTER IV

THE GREEN BANNER OF ALLAH



IN THE morning he crossed the Place Djemaa el Fna in blazing sunlight. The air was a dry furnace heat that stole perspiration until the unwary was choking with thirst. In the summer Marrakech would be evacuated of European women and children, and the white men who stayed would drink themselves into insensibility until fall came. Jake glanced up at the Atlas mountains that backed the city to the east and south, eternally snow-capped. In that brittle clear air they looked like the very ramparts of the city. They were fifty miles away. He thought of the poor devils that suffered out the summer in Marrakech, looking up at the eternal snows.

But maybe he could take that easier than standing on the terrace of the Palace Cafe in Tangier, and looking out at seas he could never sail again.

He paid scant attention to the throngs in the great square. The mountain men from the Haut Atlas, with their camel-hide sandals and zebra-striped robes, Bedouin women with black silk face masks, camel drivers screaming as they drove their beasts on with towering loads of sheepskins from the desert.

He pushed into a narrow street, a winding path with a latticework of palm fronds overhead, breaking the sun into shifting mottles that made every moving thing seem to jerk and jog along. After a while he stopped. On his left was the teuberna of a fat Moor named Ali. He wanted talk, and Ali could give informative talk when he chose.

The tea shop was simple; behind the fly curtain of glass beads was a single room with reed mats on the floor. Three Arabs were stretched out smoking long-stemmed pipes and drinking tea. Jake squatted down in a corner.

Ali came with quick shuffling steps. He smiled broadly.

"A long time since Allah has favored us with your presence," he said in French.

"*Mu'amm'd*," Jake grunted, smiling back at him.

"Perhaps it is business that brings you so far from—"

Jake cut in sharply with a quick glance at the three Arabs. "So far from nowhere. Tea, Ali."

"Perhaps a-pipe?" He took a handful of long-stemmed bone pipes from a shelf.

"No."

"Something—aromatic?" Ali fluttered a fat hand. Jake saw the glazed eyes of the two nearest Arabs.

"No kiff." Jake had always despised those who used drugs to release them from reality. Fat Ali scurried off for the tea, and Jake pulled a newspaper from his pocket.

The article was on the front page. An investigation was being conducted by the police about the mysterious photographs that were flooding Morocco. Pictures of a sword. There was one in the paper. Underneath it was the inscription in Arabic, and the translation.

The Sword of Mulai Ismail. It Will Come! the inscription said. Jake growled to himself, accepted the glass of tea Ali brought, and began sipping it. Only a few days before, Manly had given him such a photograph as though it were the only one of its kind. Perhaps Manly thought it was.

Lost in thought, he looked up, and pinned to the opposite wall was a photo of the sword!

He switched back to the paper. Another article had caught his eye, and something told him it fitted in, ominously. A story about the coming visit of the Sultan of Morocco to the Caliph of the Spanish Zone. Theoretically, the Caliph was subject to the Sultan. Actually, each was the puppet of the foreigners who ruled his land. The meeting would be in Melilla; a good-will tour. Jake wondered. Suppose the hands of the puppeteers should tremble? Or, like Pinocchio, the puppets should come alive?

"Ali," he called.

The Arab came, carrying his own glass of tea. Jake motioned him to be seated. He crossed his fat legs and dropped down to sit on his heels, grunting, adjusting his none-too-clean robes.

"Ali. What talk is there of The Sword?"

The fat man drew a long pipe from under his burnoose. He sighed.

"Americans are popular in Morocco." He smiled broadly. "Perhaps because we see so little of them. Whereas the devilish French and their soldiers are everywhere."

Jake flicked his cigarette with a gesture of irritation.

"Your philosophizing does not amuse me," he said. Ali was starting on one of those windy, roundabout oriental discourses, and Jake was impatient. Just then the first booming drums of the day began. Jake shivered.

"*Tres bien*," Ali said with a smile. "What I mean is, your neck is in less danger of being opened quickly with a keen knife than a French neck is."

"Jeh—" Jake cut himself off. He did not want to use the Arabic word when there were so many Arabic ears present. "*Guerre sainte?* Holy war?"

Ali sighed and his fat chins shook. "The photograph on the wall is to signify that I sympathize. I hate French, yes, as in the Rif they hate the Spanish. It is natural that one should hate the rulers."

"But you know what would happen if the French were no longer here?"

Ali nodded. "You have a technical word for it. Anarchy. Not very descriptive. It would mean a return to the days of him whose sword we speak of. Blood would run like the rains that will come this month."

Jake rubbed his chin. "And his Sherifien Majesty, when he journeys to Melilla—"

"Ahh. Yes. Melilla is a troublesome spot. The Riffians tried war before. Yes. Abd el Krim lost."

"They know they can't win! The mountains, maybe, but on the plains, they can't beat Europe with its tanks and planes!"

"No." Ali smiled sadly. "You see, I am a man of peace. Better that the infidels rule, than that. But!" He held up a fat finger and pointed it into Jake's face. "Perhaps they cannot win, but they *can* not lose!"

Jake stared at the dirty finger, at the fat face. Yes, he understood. "In war, the worst they can suffer is death, and that is the best, eh? A man who dies with infidel blood on his sword—*pfift!* A quick trip to Heaven, eh?"

Ali stood up, smiling. "Such are my

people. I, I am a man of peace." He left then, to care for a new customer.

A man of peace, Jake thought. But he had not missed the knife under Ali's sash.

Nor had he missed the thread that ran through his talk. The sword. It was the key. And Jake knew that soon he would have his hands on that sword.



THE DAY was spent as any tourist's day might be. He hired a horse and rode around the city. He took a siesta. He did not see the girl. He knew she would see him when she wanted. She knows what the game is, he thought. Let her make the moves.

Dark was gathering as he threaded through the cooking fires and story-tellers' circles in the Djemaa el Fna. He stopped at one for a moment and mingled with the crowd. The man within was an old Arab, waving his arms as he acted out the story. He made his voice drop low and the crowd strained to hear. It was a tale about a captive princess. The villain entered the story, rattling his scimitar. He threatened the princess. The crowd gasped with horror. The crafty old story-teller then announced that thirty francs would bring the hero. A rain of copper fell into the circle. Jake moved on.

The drums were gathering force now. A hundred of them, throbbing and racing the heart. Jake sucked his lungs full of hot dusty air. He ran a hand over the heavy automatic pistol in his coat pocket. Then he cut into a narrow street.

The latticework above let the full moonlight flood the street with a queer broken light in which burnoosed and sheeted figures moved as in a dream. Jake took the first turning. It cut the throb of the drums a little. Allowed him to hear the soft shuffling of slippers as he threaded through the crowds.

Suddenly he heard it. The squeaking shoes.

He stopped with a jerk, looked around. The crowd milled past him. Not a European in the lot. All were cowed figures in striped robes. He growled at himself and at his jumpy nerves. Many well-to-do Arabs wore complete European clothes under their robes. Many shoes squeaked. It was gone now.

He walked more slowly. There was little chance for a man in European clothes to throw off a robed shadow. He turned toward the street of the tailors. He wanted a big shop with a back exit.

He came out on a main thoroughfare. The drums were louder there, a pulsing boom-ba-boom that seemed to move the very dust to its rhythm. He ducked into a store. The merchant straightened his red fez and his eyes glittered with eagerness.

Jake tore a brown burnoose from a rack and slipped around the counter to a back room, the merchant, puzzled, padding after him on slippers that slapped the floor loosely. In the dark, Jake said, "Get me one of a different color."

He pulled a roll of bills from his pocket as the merchant hesitated. That did it. The man became all action. He yanked a coarse gray burnoose from a shelf. Jake pulled it over his head and shook it down. It reached his feet. He stuffed his hat into his coat pocket and put the cowl over his head.

"Five thousand francs," the merchant said.

Jake smiled at such bold robbery, but paid. Squeaky Shoes might be in the front of the store right now. "Back door," he whispered hoarsely.

The man let him out into a garden, and a gate led to an alley. He could have warned the merchant not to tell what kind of robe he had sold. A fine waste of breath.

He hoped that Squeaky Shoes would waste time asking.

He returned to the main street as soon as he could find it. Hunched deep in the cowl, he paced himself with the regular movement of traffic, putting his hands behind his back and clasping them, as most Arabs did when walking. The flutes were starting in the Djemaa el Fna now, their weird piping cutting through the night air. He ducked into an alley, turned left, left again and was on the same street. Slowly he paced in the direction of the warehouse of a certain dealer in leather.

The exact direction was not necessary. The stink of half-cured hides blasted out of an archway and Jake ducked inside. An Arab boy with baggy pantaloons scurried out to meet him.

"I come from Ahmed ben Hadj," Jake said. "Tell your master that hides are needed in Tangier."

The boy scuttled off. He returned almost immediately and led Jake through the warehouse, filled with great stinking heaps of sheepskins.

He went through a beaded curtain. In a large room with rush mats a pasty-faced Arab sat before a brass tray, on which rested two glasses of tea, the mint in them still green as shamrock. He seemed to have been waiting.

"I am Mustafa ben Hadj." His black eyes flicked over Jake. He did not rise, but indicated that Jake should be seated.

"Brother of Ahmed ben Hadj?" Jake said in French. This small, squat man did not look like the Tangier merchant, but his snowy white turban, his clear, trained speech indicated that he was well-born. Well-born brothers did not always resemble each other in the Arab world. A wealthy father could afford many wives.

"His brother, as Allah willed it. But he did not say you would dress in the Moorish fashion."

Jake was about to say that Ahmed did not know he would dress in a burnoose. No, his being followed was his own affair. "A man moves easier in Marrekech, dressed thusly," he said.

Mustafa's black eyes retreated a bit. He raised his glass of tea. "As you Americans say, 'Here's to you.'"

Jake smiled, raised his glass of tea. "Your brother sends Allah's greetings. He wishes you to send certain goods to Tangier. I will be the custodian."

Mustafa regarded him blankly. He placed a dead-white hand on a small prayer rug that was rolled up beside him. The movement of his hand caught Jake's eyes.

The rug was oddly shaped. Bent in a strange way. Mustafa kept his hand on it, his eyes on Jake's face.

Jake found that every nerve was alert. Through the dead silence of the room came the throb of the drums. They were starting to dance out there now, he thought, for already a few were raising the beat, impatient to start the night's emotional orgy. Jake felt sweat running down his palms. He rubbed his arm over the gun in his pocket, perhaps for reassur-

ance, perhaps to be doing something. And still Mustafa stared at him.

"You will carry out your mission?" the man intoned slowly, his speech falling into the cadence of the drums. "Even though—a mountain—of gold—or the—Ten Thousand Houris—of Paradise—" His voice dropped off, but the drums kept repeating it. "A mountain—of gold, Ten Thousand Houris—"

Jake caught his breath. The man before him was swaying, as though hypnotized by the drums. Jake fought with himself. He *would not* talk as though the drums were in his blood! "Yes!" he said suddenly. "Your brother—"

The man smiled and his eyes grew large. His hand clutched the tassels on the end of the rug. He swung it toward Jake, and the rug unfurled.

Jake heard the glass drop from his hand and shatter on the brass tray.

It blazed on the rug like a crescent of liquid gold, shimmering with the glow of a thousand precious stones. The Sword! The unholy scimitar of Mulai Ismail!

He let his breath wheeze out. It was two and a half feet from hilt to the point of the scabbard. The scabbard was encrusted with rubies and diamonds; Jake thought, like a damn barber pole! A swirl of emeralds around the hilt—a more real than real imitation of the Green Banner of Allah.

He grabbed the hilt and jerked the blade out of the scabbard. The blade was not jeweled. It was pure shining steel. He forced it down on the point. It bent almost double.

He released it and it sprang back to shape with a whirr.

"Damascus?" he said. He found his voice was trembling.

Mustafa shrugged. "Toledo, perhaps. During the Caliphate of Cordova."

The scabbard snared his eyes again. Manly's words came back to him. "A banana republic!" Indeed, it would buy a banana republic—lock, stock and barrel.

The Arab took it from his shaking hands and carefully rolled it up in the prayer rug. "The time is not yet. You may go now."

Jake stood up. He was sweating. The strength seemed to be washed out of him. "I have promised to take it to Tangier," he said. "Tell me, how will the sword be used?"

The Arab's pasty face broke into a thin smile. "How is a sword used?" His voice went on, thin and flat. "To taste blood."

Smiling, he led Jake to a rear door. He turned to Jake as he opened it, his dull black eyes without expression. "Later, I will give you the sword. Go as Allah wills."

Jake was stunned by the sword. He touched the gun in his pocket, and for a crazy moment he thought of shooting the pasty-faced old Arab and running with the scimitar.

"Allah wills that you take my orders. What is written is written. Go!"

The door closed behind him. Jake found himself in a pitch-black alley and the desert dust was again in his nostrils. He turned to the door. It was set flat into the wall. Not even a knob.

That sword! He paced hurriedly down the alley. He couldn't think, with the glitter of the jewels dancing before his eyes. He cursed it, cursed the drums and the



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It blazed on the rug like a crescent of liquid gold, shimmering with the glow of a thousand precious stones . . . The Sword!

piercing flutes that whined into the alley and splintered into his ears. He cursed Mustafa and Ahmed and—

"*Para ti, hombre,*" the voice rasped. A darker shadow than the night rose out of the alley and something mashed into his forehead. He plunged forward, ignoring the stars that spun around him, tried to grapple the man. He heard the shoes squeak. His arms were tangled with robes. Again it thudded down, catching the back



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of his head and smashing him to the pavement. A heavy man sat down on his back and a knife pricked into the back of his neck.

"One move and I chop your spine," Squeaky Shoes said in Spanish. Jake tried to raise his head, but it was swollen to bursting. The knife gouged his neck and he felt a hot liquid dribble down to his chin. Hands gouged roughly over his body. The man cursed savagely.

Jake fought for the strength to talk. "I haven't got it," he panted. "But—next time, I'm going to kill you, Squeaky Shoes!"

The man laughed hoarsely. He rolled Jake over, sat heavily on his belly and put the knife point to his solar plexus. He was wearing a coarse, burlap-like burnoose, Jake saw, his face protruding from the cowl. The tiny mustache and knife scar

were dim gashes in the shadows. Jake swore at him and for a moment he blacked out. He couldn't come around. His head was too much like a mashed tomato.

Suddenly, Squeaky Shoes was gone.

Jake lay and groaned, clutching his battered head in both hands. It must have been a steel knife butt that the man hit him with. If it weren't for the cowl protecting him a little, he'd have a cracked head.

Suddenly he became aware of a clean perfume. It didn't go with the dust and his exploding head. It came from above. He opened his eyes. Crouched over him was an oval face and large gray eyes. Madeline!

"Are you all right, Crawford?" She said it calmly, but there was a husky hesitancy in the back of her voice.

"I'm lousy," he said. "I don't think my head's broken, but it's dented."

Severely, she said, "That's what you get for masquerading. A European is safer in Marrakech than an Arab." She helped him sit up. He put both hands flat on the pavement and shook his head. He touched the back of his neck. The bleeding had stopped but it stung. She took



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one arm and helped him to his feet. When he was standing she still held the arm.

"What're you doing here?" he rasped, waving a hand over the dark alley.

She smiled faintly. "I saw you pass fifteen minutes ago. That burnoose isn't much of a disguise when somebody walks as belligerently as you do. I became curious when you didn't come out of the shop. I glimpsed a man waiting in this alley, and then he went in. I was afraid to follow, until I saw him come running out."

Jake raised his right eyebrow, smiled faintly, and they started walking toward the street. A neat story. He'd believe it, if his grandmother were telling it. He shrugged. You could do worse than have a lovely woman like Madeline clinging to your arm. She was close and the soft roundness of her body was pressed against his side. They walked out to the street.

Suddenly her hand tightened on his arm. "Crawford, you're through with going to sea?"

Jake's eyebrow rose again and he glanced at her. Her face was serious. Now why in the devil did she say that? He wished his head weren't so close to bursting. Then maybe he'd be able to figure it out.

"Yes," he said. She knew about his past, and it didn't matter. "I'm through. I don't talk like a sailor any more even, and I bet I've forgotten how to work a star sight." He shrugged. "Blacklisted. I captained for the Falangists, only—" He knew he shouldn't tell her this, but the blow on the head seemed to have knocked his senses loose. "Only maybe I wouldn't be blacklisted if the truth were known." He grinned at her. "That's all done. I've got a better racket. I'm the only honest man in Tangier. I make my living that way."

She nodded slowly, staring vacantly at the robed crowd they were moving through. "I know. That's a funny racket. Only—be careful, Crawford."

"Careful of what?"

She gave him a slow, gray-eyed look. "If you act it too long, after a while it won't be an act. And that is dangerous."

He laughed. "Dangerous to be too honest?"

She did not laugh, or smile. "Very dangerous, Jake. Very dangerous."



THEY threaded through the crowd in the Djemaa el Fna. The dancers had started, and the drummers were speeding the beat. They stopped to watch a giant Negro in the center of the circle of chanting Arabs. He had placed a cactus leaf, bristling with spines, on his bare head. His body wove back and forth slowly to the rhythm, working his scalp against the spines. He was grinning, his eyes bulging, the whites gleaming strangely in his blue-black face.

"He's gone already," Jake said. "Let's go before the blood starts running." At another circle a young girl was dancing, throwing her head back and forth in quick jerks. A flute was shrilling into her ear and she moved more slowly, the black hair flopping to her back, over in an arc to her breast. Her eyes were closed. Suddenly she gave a cry and flung herself to the side of the circle. An Arab caught her, hid her feverish head in his robes.

"That's Morocco in the flesh," he said, thumbing toward the unconscious girl. Madeline's hand trembled on his arm. They went on and came out of the crowd in front of the hotel.

As they entered, Madeline said, "Would you take me to dinner? I've some things to tell you—Jake."

He nodded. "I'm going to bathe first. This dust makes you feel like you've been rolling in the street." He watched her as she went up the stairs, her lithe hips swaying. He turned to the room clerk.

The owl-eyed Frenchman smiled. "Good way to see the native quarter. I thought Madame was with an Arab when you came in wearing that burnoose."

Jake shook the cowl off his head. He waited as the clerk fumbled in his mailbox and took out a yellow envelope. Jake took it and tore it open as he went up the stairway. He glanced at the signature to the telegram. Manly. He cursed under his breath.

DON'T FORGET WE SHARE PHOTOGRAPH, it read.

He crossed the courtyard to his room. As the key rattled in the lock, he heard a whip of a sound within. He smiled. Perhaps Squeaky Shoes was paying him a visit.

He slid a hand under his burnoose

and got the heavy automatic from his pocket. He opened the door, gripping the gun and leveling it waist-high. He sidled in and kicked the door shut. He reached for the light switch.

"No. Close the shutters."

The voice came hollowly out of the tile bathroom. It was black in there, the door partly open. Jake bit on his lip. Sweat bugged out on his forehead.

"The shutters."

He closed the blinds.

"Now the light." He flicked the light switch. There was a quick sigh from the bathroom. Out of the darkness came Mustafa ben Hadj, his squatty form moving sluggishly across the room. Under his arm was a rolled prayer rug and in his left hand an automatic pistol. He slid the gun in under his robes.

"*Muhammed*," he said, without smiling or waiting for answer. He laid the prayer rug down on the bed. With a reverent touch, he unrolled it. The scimitar blazed and the room shone with the glitter of its jewels.

Mustafa forced his dull black eyes from the sword. "The only train tomorrow leaves at half past six in the morning. By night you will arrive in Tangier." He shuffled to the door, turned and cast one more adoring look at the sword.

"Go with Allah. If Allah wills it, the sword will arrive safely." And Mustafa was gone.

CHAPTER V

BLACKLISTED INNOCENTS



JAKE sat turning the heavy scimitar over in his hands. He held it up to the light. He was no lapidary, but a glittering stream of jewels ran through Tangier, and a man in his position saw many of them. If these were paste, then he'd seen paste sold for a thousand dollars a carat. The great rubies that tipped the guard would bring fifty thousand alone. The thing was worth a king's ransom, only kings weren't that rich any more.

He went over to his suitcase, dumped the clothes out on the bed and laid the sword in the bottom. It just fit. He tumbled his clothes in on top and left it

standing open. And then came the light rap on the door.

His back froze. Madeline! He went to the door.

She was beautiful in a black cape over a lemon-colored dress, her legs sleek in filmy nylons.

"A lady doesn't like to be kept waiting," she said, smiling. "And besides, I'm hungry."

Or, he thought, she had come to see why an Arab had been in his room. And perhaps, why there had been a couple of Arabs behind the potted palms, for he was sure that Mustafa had not come unattended.

And now she would expect him to take her out to dinner. Oh no you don't, he thought. You can't take a two-and-a-half-foot scimitar to dinner, and he wasn't going to leave it behind.

He stepped aside for her to enter.

"A man seldom finds such beauty waiting at his door," he said. "Come in." He waved toward the wide leather chair under the window. As she sat down he opened the shutters.

"Packing?" she said, indicating the open suitcase.

He went over to the bed and pushed the buzzer for service, smiled without answering her question.

"You can bathe while I sip a cooling drink," she said.

He smiled again, shaking his head slowly. No, he would not bathe and leave her alone in a room that contained the Scimitar of Mulai Ismail.

"The bath can wait too." The Arab boy came then, and he told him to bring vermouth. He handed her a cigarette, lit it and one for himself and sat on the edge of the bed, smoking slowly, watching her face. It showed irritation. Her lips were drawn up tight. She knew the sword was there. He was sure of that. They were silent until the Arab boy came with vermouth. Jake poured it over the ice and handed her a glass.

"You were going to tell me some things tonight," he said, sinking down on the bed. He drew off the burnoose, sat staring at the rose-colored vermouth, sipped it and glanced up at her.

She blinked. "Perhaps I was going to tell you why I'm not picking apples or

making hard gingerbread in front of an open fire. Why my hair is dyed and my eyebrows shaven."

"You're blacklisted too, I suppose," he said, grinning. He wondered why she didn't pursue the matter of going to dinner. Maybe after the drink was finished she would press it. He didn't know what he would say; but he wasn't going to leave that sword.

"I worked inside the Gestapo. I saved many Frenchmen's lives. But no one knows it. There's nothing I can show to prove it."

Her voice was tight and she was looking at Jake almost coldly. Her saying so didn't prove what side of the Gestapo she was on. But she was saying something else, too, something he couldn't understand. Something was hidden. He picked up the cigarette pack. It crumpled, empty. He set his glass on the table and went over to the closet where he kept a carton. When he was there he wondered what it was he didn't catch in her voice. A pleading sound. Something she wanted him to know, or to do, and she couldn't put it into words.

When he came back she was pouring more vermouth in the glasses. She held hers up. "Health to a couple of blacklisted—" She paused, searching for a word. "Blacklisted innocents." They clinked glasses. They drank, eyeing each other over the rims.

Jake glanced out at the courtyard, at the moonlight sprinkling silver on the leaves of the potted palms. They seemed to grow dim. A cloud passing before the moon, he thought. He sipped more of his drink.

But there were no clouds! Marrakech never had a cloud at this season! He jerked his glance back to the girl. Her face seemed to be clouded. As though she were wearing a veil. Her eyes, though, were hard, fixed on him. He fumbled for a cigarette and had a hard time finding the pack. He struggled to get a cigarette out of it. His fingers weren't fine enough for the job. Like sausages, rubbing each other. Suddenly his mouth dropped open. He jerked his face toward her, and it was like heaving a lead weight loosely attached to his neck. She was smoking, a wreath of smoke oozing out of her mouth and cloud-

ing around her face. She seemed to weave in the smoke.

"Ugh!" he blurted. His tongue was thick. He heard the glass shatter as it dropped from his hands. He leaned toward her. "Damn!" he gurgled. His lips were thick and loose as sowbelly. "You—damn you—you drugged me!"

She remained sitting there, staring at him with hard gray eyes, smoke oozing from her mouth. The drums pounded in on them, and she was swaying to the drums. Swaying, swaying. The sword! She'll take the sword! He dove for her, arms outstretched. She did not move, just swayed with the drums. He was on the floor and the roof was pressing down on his back. Drugged!

He saw her walk calmly to the door, close it. Her cloak swayed darkly. The drums boomed. He could see her black spike-heeled shoes next to his face. Above, the slim nylon-sheathed ankles.

Slowly the shoes turned. They walked to the left. Toward the valise. And the sword.

And off into the black fog.



HE LAY there a long time watching the hands on the travel clock chase each other. Dawn broke in at six-thirty.

The travel clock was on a night table next to the bed and from where he was lying he could see it easily. At six-thirty the day's only train would leave. For a while the image of the train, puffing and gathering speed, filled his numbed brain and he couldn't see the clock. The long hand made a stuttering jump and it was seven. By then only half the roof was pushing him down. The hand fluttered again. As it ticked toward seven-thirty it started to raise the roof off him. She would be staring out the train window, watching the desert speed by at sixty miles an hour.

He thought of the button at the head of the bed that would call the Arab serving boy. He rolled a little. He could move. He found the rubber bones supported him enough to crawl on his elbows over to the bed. He lay there panting. Then somewhere he found the strength to climb up on the bed and lie there. He couldn't raise his hand to the button. The minute hand had to drag itself over another half circle.

It took both hands to exert enough pressure to ring the bell.

The Arab boy came in through the sunlight, his pants flapping. "Hot—coffee." It came out in a whispering gasp and that was all he had strength for.

The owl-eyed room clerk came in, stared myopically at him. They brought coffee. The hands on the travel clock had crawled to eight-thirty by the time he could pour coffee into a mouth that felt like engine room waste. He thought of that because for a moment he dreamed he was at sea again, and the night before had been in some port he couldn't remember the name of, but there was plenty of liquor. Maybe it was because the room clerk muttered something about "drunk." He lay there and thought. The coffee helped.

At Casablanca, the connecting train would delay her two hours. If a fast car—

"A car, hire it for the day," he told the Arab boy. "Big, fast, powerful."

He never knew how he got to that car. He was swaying drunkenly as he clung to the Arab boy. He had managed somehow to stuff his clothes into his bag, pay his bill, stagger down to the front of the hotel and crawl into a long, ancient Daimler. A grinning Arab was at the wheel.

He had known that the sword would be gone from his suitcase. But she didn't have to steal his gun too. He cursed her. He told the Arab to drive to Casablanca as fast as the Daimler would go.

He left the roof fall on him again.

It was almost noon when he could sit up and smoke a cigarette. The blazing

headache didn't matter. The Arab chauffeur was grinning madly, his foot mashing the big pedal down to the floorboards.

"Plenty fast, eh?" he chortled.

Jake figured it out. The train would be arriving at Casablanca now. If she were not going north, he couldn't catch her in the big city anyway. If she were, she would be at Rabat, the capital of Morocco, at mid-afternoon. Better not to go into Casablanca. Just lose time.

"Driver," he said. His tongue was working better now. "Ten thousand francs if we beat the train to Rabat."

"He-e-e!" the Arab chattered. He crouched over the wheel like an escaped monkey, joyously tramping on the gas pedal. The Daimler roared through the desert, out the fertile flat wheatlands. We've got good roads, Jake thought. Just so the big car didn't throw a wheel—

He dozed again. He dreamed, this time. It was Madeline, chanting to him. "Nothing to show them. Nothing to show them." That woke him. No, there was nothing she could show them, after the war, nothing that proved she worked inside the Gestapo and for the resistance. Jake could understand that. But where would that fit in?

The blackmail broker!

He grunted, as though in pain. Somehow, he couldn't hate her, in spite of the drugging. He lit a cigarette feverishly.

"Driver, we got to beat that train to Rabat!"

"He-e-e!" the Arab laughed.

Jake shucked enough money out of his wallet to pay the driver as the car slowed on entering the Rabat suburbs. He put his bag on his lap, sat with nerves tingling



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as the big car wheeled up to the railroad station.

He flung the door open and threw the money to the driver, raced into the high-domed station. Roaring through its passages came the scream of airbrakes. The train was coming in. He aimed for the ticket gate where a sleepy little French railroader was taking stubs. He went past the man like a tornado and dove into the crowd on the *quai*.

"First Class Petitjean-Tanger," he saw in gold letters on the car. That was it. She'd take first class because it offered a good chance of being alone. He got into the steel vestibule at the end of the First Class car and stood, waiting. The car jerked, a clang of steel as bumpers met, a shrill of the whistle. He caught a hand rail. They were under way. He left his bags and went into the narrow corridor.

She was in the third compartment, alone among the red-leather seats. She still wore the black cape and the lemon-colored dress. The glass door was latched. He rapped lightly on it. As she turned, he smiled.

The color rushed from her face. She looked feverishly around. There was nothing but the box-like compartment, the long window beyond which telephone poles and houses whirled by. And at the door, Jake Crawford. Slowly she stood up, moved toward the door as though groping her way in the dark. She lifted the latch, turned her back on him and walked back to her seat next to the window.

Jake entered and locked the door, sat down facing her.

"I'm taking over, Madeline. See, if I call the police, the thing is in your bag. And the cops would like to get their hands on that hunk of merchandise. They've seen the photos. They know what the game is." He stared hard at her. "Which bag is it in?"

She pointed to a pigskin valise. Jake sat back in his seat, pulled a pack of cigarettes out and offered them to her. She took one. Her fingers were steady. Her downcast face was resigned to whatever might come. She was in his hands. She leaned over to the match he held, her eyes too weary to meet his.

He said, "The way it looks to me, the blackmail broker will tip off the French

police about you, if you don't come through. Right?" He leaned forward and put his hand on her arm.

She looked up. A tear was collecting in her eyes. "The blackmail broker? Yes, I guess that covers it." Her eyes fell again.

"So you're finished with him. You're with me, now. Who is the blackmail broker? And Squeaky Shoes—your Spanish friend."

"Alfredo?" Her eyes lifted. "Ah, Alfredo." The way she said it made Jake glance toward the door, but there was nobody in the passage. Still, Squeaky Shoes would be on the train. She went on. "I don't know who the—blackmail broker—is. I was working in Casablanca. Alfredo came and told me I had to work for him. He knew all about me." Suddenly her eyes went wide. "But no! You and your precious honesty. You're going to deliver it to—well, I don't know who. But it won't go on the jewel market."

Jake raised an eyebrow. "Ah, my honesty creeps in, eh? No. Not the jewel market. The blood market."

She was silent, staring out the window and smoking absently. At last she said, "You know what you're doing, handing over that sword? That sword is the symbol. Jihad. The Holy War. What a precious business asset your honesty is! And you can't discard it, not even this once. You're stuck with it, Crawford!"

He knew that. Stuck with too much honesty. And all he could do was think of the burden of honesty he carried and stare at the girl's beaten face, as the train roared north toward the Spanish border.



IT WAS dark when they entered the Spanish Zone, and customs officers and soldiers came aboard. "Be sure it's covered with a lot of fripperies," he said. "Lacy silk stuff. And sit close to me. They'll think we're eloping, or some such."

They were close together when the glass door slid open and a Cordovan-leather hat stuck through. "*Contrabanda? Qui tienen declarar?*"

"Nada," Jake said. He opened her bags and his, which he had brought in from the vestibule, waved a careless hand toward them. The soldier bent over the bag with the sword in it. He plunged a dirty hand

into the silk underclothes. He laughed to cover his embarrassment. He sat on the edge of the seat.

"*Un cigarro, hombre?*" he said.

Jake put a thousand-franc bill under the cigarette pack, handed it to the soldier with a wink. "Little perfume in there, going on to Tangier anyway."

The soldier laughed. He marked the three bags with a crayon, saluted, lit a cigarette and deftly pocketed the money. He left, the cigarette dangling from his lips.

Jake wiped the sweat from his brow. "Never can tell about those fellows." In the corridor, people were passing, moving uncertainly as the train howled over a piece of rough track. Suddenly his back turned to ice. One of the faces going by—the little mustache, the knife scar—Alfredo!

"There he is," he rasped to the girl.

She shrugged passively. "He'll wait until we get to the station. He'll have friends there."

So, Jake thought, he was safe until then. For two more hours he was safe, while the train whirled on.

When the train crossed the frontier and was into the International Zone, Jake went into action. He was not going to meet the party at the station. He opened his bag and got out the burnoose he had bought in Marrakech. While she watched he threw it over his head, slipped into the long robe. He crouched over her suitcase. In a moment he had the sword under the robe, the golden chain at its hilt fastened to his belt. He got his gun out too, dropped it into his coat pocket. He turned toward her.

"Tough game, Madeline." He grasped her wrist, held it tightly. "Listen. There's a place called the Cafe Langouste on the waterfront. I'll move my honesty one peg further on. I'll meet you there." He looked for an answer in her eyes. They were too liquid, too beaten to show what he was searching for.

He hurried out. He couldn't take that look.

At the rear of the car he entered the steel vestibule. The side doors were marked *Do not open while train is under-way* in three languages. It was too dark to see that, but Jake knew it was there.

He stood with his hand on the doorhandle and watched the glittering lights of Tangier draw near; there was a long stretch where the rails ran through drifted sand dunes, and a man couldn't get hurt badly, even at fifty miles an hour. He thought of Alfredo. His hand clutched the hilt of the sword. Almost without thinking he slid it out of the scabbard, with a rasping scratch. That set all his nerves tingling. He backed against the door he was going to open. Another two minutes—he would be three miles from the Zocco Chico. He hooked the curved blade up until the tip was at the armhole in the burnoose, his hand welded to the hilt.

The door from the corridor opened slowly. It was pitch dark out there, the wind howling through openings in the steel sides of the car; a man came through like a tall dark shadow. His shoes squeaked.

"Hello, Alfredo," Jake said. The words bit out into the dark. The man jerked to a stop, backing the door closed behind him.

"*Ah, tu!*" he breathed.

"I warned you, Alfredo. The next time I kill you. Go back through that door!"

The big man's breath hissed out. Suddenly he was a black shadow, flinging himself forward. Jake saw the flash of steel. It was coming in low, underhanded, in the fashion of an experienced man with knives.

Very coolly he slashed the sword out. Cloth ripped. Alfredo gasped as he saw light turn the long curved blade into a noon-like arc. Then he couldn't see it any more. Jake felt the sword slow down. Like swimming and pushing your fist through the water. The blade had disappeared. Alfredo's knife clanked on the steel floor. The train lurched around a bend and Alfredo left the sword. He crashed to the other side of the car, tumbling, landing in a crouched heap.

Jake slid the bloody sword back into the scabbard. That curve in the tracks—cutting into the sand dunes. He grabbed the door handle, pulled it open and latched it that way. There was another car behind. He backed to the other side, caught up the skirts to his robe. Then he took three steps and launched himself into space...

He was rolled into a ball when he hit the sand dune. Like a ball he rolled and it pounded every muscle of his body into a stinging mass. He hit the bushes and scratched to a halt. He heard the train whistle blast, and the pounding wheels rolled on.

CHAPTER VI

THE BLOODY JEWELS



THE SWORD was heavy by the time he tramped three miles into town. It had a filthy feel, too, that made it seem to squirm in his hand. But he didn't regret running it through Alfredo. He felt as though Alfredo had killed himself on it.

The Rue de Seville was empty and black. He paused as he approached the boarded-up store. He stopped and leaned against a wall, a tall figure swathed in a coarse burnoose. Underneath the robe, his hand was loose on the hilt of the sword.

He'd kept himself from thinking of it, up to now. His vaunted honesty laid heavy on his shoulders. Ahmed had warned him of that, and so had Madeline. Too much honesty was dangerous. He had used honesty as a business asset, and perhaps it was too hot a flame to toy with. His honesty was forcing him to give the sword to Ahmed ben Hadj. That would be enough of a curse to lay on his honesty, knowing the bloodthirsty plans Ahmed had for the sword. But there was more. Manly and the blackmail broker.

But to give it to Manly? Then his honesty, his promise to Ahmed, was through. His honesty now seemed like a pretty wretched business asset.

His limp hand stiffened on the sword hilt. A door opened twenty feet down the street. A face was pushed out. Even in the poor light he could see the two holes in his face. Ahmed's noseless servant.

"Crawford?" he croaked.

Jake let out a long wrenching sigh. His legs felt like rubber as he walked toward the door. He moved his hand to the handle of his gun and ducked under the doorway. Noseless ushered him into the plain, reed-matted room with the brazier and tea kettle in the middle. Against the wall stood Ahmed ben Hadj.

"Ahh! Crawford!" the Arab said. His black eyes were well dilated, Jake saw. The hooked nose and chiseled chin were held high, and a thin white smile showed.

"You owe me three thousand dollars," Jake growled. He was resigned to it now. "I've got your damn sword."

Ahmed smiled and his kiff-dilated eyes danced. "And your honesty—has it been difficult to remain the only honest man in Tangier?"

Jake's eyes flicked. "The money, you devil!"

Ahmed produced the wad of bills from under his robe. He laughed to himself as he counted out the money. He pitched it in a heap on the floor.

"And now, the sword?" He looked up, taunting.

Jake's mind was moving fast. He would throw the sword down on the floor. Any man would be dazzled by it. A fanatic like Ahmed—he would be paralyzed. Then there would be the gun in Jake's pocket. Take the sword—give it to Manly—and he'd be back where he wanted to be, the only honest man in Tangier. He almost grinned as he reached under his robes to unfasten the sword's gold chain.

"And your gun, too," Ahmed said. His mouth tightened to a hairline. His eyes were a cold flinty black, and the kiff was gone. The tight lips moved rapidly and he said, "Your friend Djallah died on a knife like that in your back."

Jake heard the hoarse breathing behind him, the snorting of a man without a nose. And he felt the razor-sharp blade of a knife slash through his burnoose, through his coat, until it was a long, thin edge of cold steel against his spine.

A brown hand slid into his coat pocket. He saw the noseless one's hand move and pitch the gun to Ahmed ben Hadj. Ahmed took it into his fist as though long experienced with that type of weapon. Then the sword was ripped from Jake's waist. After that the noseless man and his knife left. The sword was dropped on the floor next to the brazier. There was blood on the jewels, Alfredo's blood, and the jewels did not sparkle so well with it clouding them.

"Ahh! It has tasted blood already!" Ahmed chattered. "Sit down Crawford."

We will have tea. You will pour while I hold the gun. You had it planned differently, eh?"

Jake's spine and legs were all rubber now. He slumped down, staring across the brazier, looking down the black barrel of his own gun.

He mumbled, "You killed Djallah that night?"

"Ah! Yes, I killed the unbelieving, liquor-swilling pig that night. I and my friends. His family was high in Morocco once, related to mine, and I, I have the blood of sultans!" His eyes went wild with ecstasy as he said that. "Djallah's job was to find a man who could be trusted. He contacted you, but he was not satisfied with the share he would get. He brought Manly in—ah, yes, my spies learned that. So my servant's knife finished Djallah. He was no more use to us."

"Us?" Jake felt strangely calm now. Strangely it was, for he knew the Arab was going to kill him, for now he was of no more use to them. But Jake thought of Madeline, and wondered if she were waiting in the Cafe Langouste, and he lost some of his calmness.

"Us. My brother and I and a few others. My brother got the sword from the tomb. Never mind how. He could not come here with it. His passport is not popular. He had a hand in the Abd el Krim revolt. Nor could I go to Marrakech, for the police of the Sultan do not like me. But I can slip across the frontier to Melilla!" The black eyes were wild again, and the hand that held the gun jerked. He laughed without control.

"I will hand the sword to the Sultan!

I will join his hand with that of the Caliph. I will tell him to draw it from the scabbard, and it will flash in the sun, and the multitudes will see it! Morocco will explode, Crawford! A modern Jihad. The scene will be photographed, as was the sword, and the people will know it was Ahmed ben Hadj who presented the sword!"

His voice dropped and his eyes became cunning. "Perhaps, Crawford, the Sultan and the Caliph, those useless puppets, will die. And when the French and Spanish dogs are swept out of Morocco—" His voice rose again and he laughed and licked his thin lips hungrily.

Jake leaned forward, tasting the salty sweat that streamed down from his lip. If only he could upset the brazier, dive for the gun. The Arab saw that in his eyes. The muzzle of the gun raised slightly.

"Monsieur Crawford, I will shoot a hole in your head if you make one move." Then his voice broke into the guttural Tangier Arabic. It was not his way of speech, but he used it so Jake would understand. Jake felt his rubbery bones stiffen with fear. He was calling Noseless and his knife. Jake did not turn. His eyes were locked on the gun that faced him. When he heard the shuffling slippers of the noseless servant, he would jump, kick the brazier—he waited, sweat streaming stickily down his face. He thought of Madeline, waiting at the Langouste—

"Ghalik!" Ahmed growled. The servant did not come. "What has happened to that—"

His voice choked off. Jake swiveled around. Something poked out of the dark

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doorway. A long metal tube an inch and a half in diameter. As he watched, flame jerked out of it. There was a shrill whine, the shriek of a bullet ripping across the room. Again the flame spat, again the whine. Jake saw Ahmed fold to the floor, his robes looking like a tent with the pole torn out from underneath.



MANLY walked through the doorway, showing his gold teeth in a wide grin. A gun was in his hand, and six inches of silencer was screwed on the end. It looked like a short rifle that way.

"Saved your damn neck, Jakey," the fat man grinned. Another man was behind him. A dark man with a V-shaped smile. Juan Reyes, the gambler.

"You double-crossed me, Jakey," Manly said. "You were supposed to give me the sword. That ain't lookin' so nice for you, Jakey." He waved the silenced pistol. A thread of smoke whisped out of the barrel.

Jake wondered what had happened to Noseless. He didn't wonder after Juan Reyes casually folded a huge clasp-knife and dropped it into his coat pocket.

Manly saw the sword. His pale blue eyes went wide, and he hurried over to it, picked it up in a trembling left hand. "The sword!" he gasped, his mouth a gold-glinting cavern, his eyes burning with that crazy glow men's eyes got when they looked at the sword for the first time.

"I didn't cross you, Manly," Jake said. He found his voice was shaking. He saw Manly was keeping a tight grip on the silenced gun, in spite of holding the sword in trembling fingers. "I promised Ahmed I'd bring him the sword." His voice became stronger. "I didn't promise you a damn thing!"

Manly tore his eyes from the sword.

"Too bad, Jakey, too bad. I only got two passages out. A Panamanian steamer is out at the sea wall, Jakey. They leave in an hour for the banana coast. See, Jakey, I'm going to have my banana republic. But there's only room for two. Looks like it'll be me and Juan. Too bad I couldn't trust you, Jakey." The silencer bore down level.

Jake was mad now, in spite of the black hole in the silencer you could put your

thumb into. "You didn't trust me from the start, Manly. You put Alfredo and the girl on my trail. You wanted to cut me out." He smiled, then, for one thought satisfied him. "Alfredo won't be looking for passage. I got him with the sword."

Manly did not shoot. For a moment he paused and then the gun switched from Jake toward Juan Reyes. And as Manly's eyes went cold and narrow, Jake knew. Juan Reyes was the blackmail broker! Alfredo and Madeline were his blackmailed slaves! It was he who knew about the Mills bomb and the trawler Jake captained and—

Reyes moved fast. The clasp knife snapped open, the handle was tight in his brown fist. As Manly swung the silenced gun around, the gambler came in like a snake, the knife underhand.

"Juan, you crossed me!" Manly gasped, but he said no more. The blade disappeared below his belt and rode upward. Blood spurted from Manly's paunch. Juan's face broke into his V grin.

With a cry, Jake was in action. He snatched the heavy sword from Manly's dying fingers. Juan Reyes leaped clear, the bloody knife in his fist, and he faced Jake. His smile vanished and his face was a flinty wedge. Jake clubbed the sheathed sword and the strength flooded through his shoulders like an electric shock. He brought it down and the hilt thudded on Juan Reyes's greasy black head. He stumbled into a corner, cowering. Jake's green eyes were burning marble now, as he chopped the sword hard and knocked the bloody knife out of the man's hand.

Panting heavily, Jake leaned on the sword. "So, Juan Reyes, the blackmail broker!"

"*Nombre de Santa Maria!*" the man prayed.

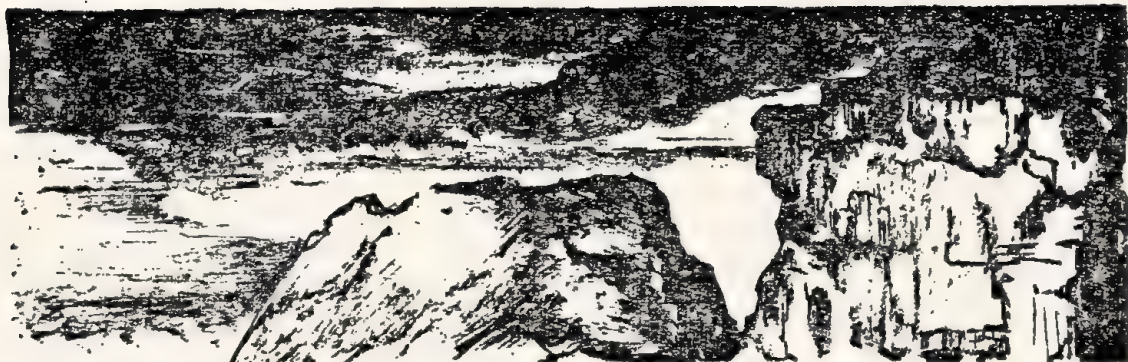
Jake wiped a shaking arm across his forehead. He glanced at Manly. He was ripped open. Back to Reyes.

"I could kill you, Juan Reyes. Madeline would be free of your blackmail. Nobody would know about the trawler, either, and I'd be back in business again."

"Mercy!" Reyes was on his knees now, his mouth working with fear.

"I won't, Reyes. Because I'm leaving

(Continued on page 127)



MEN AND THE MOUNTAIN

By E. C. Tovey

We are the lonely, who strove with Olympus,
We have been gods—how can we be men
Rooted to earth, to a peace-ridden valley?
Better to die, than live earth-bound again.

We may swear off the mountain, like sinners,
Cajoled for a moment by sweetheart or wife;
Yes, but the mountain has infinite patience
And infinite time—while we have but one life.

One little life—and there must come a moment
When earth-bonds are broken, earth-pledges betrayed;
The tears and reproaches—we leave them behind us.
The mountain has called—and it must be obeyed.

*Burning in sunlight and freezing in snowfall,
Torn by the winds on the terrible height;
Crowding death out of each slippery foothold,
Numb in the darkness—and praying for light.*

*Bridging the crevasse and testing the snowfield,
Erring—and swung on Eternity's thread;
Always alert for the avalanche thunder—
(The mountain has mercy and buries its dead!)*

*Then down from the ghost-world, to where the gray rocks are,
Down from the rocks to gnarled timberline's band;
Down from the dwarf-trees through tall, quiet forests,
Then down through the hills, to smooth meadowland . . .*

Those whom the mountain has spared from its thralldom,
The damned (or the fortunate) question our game:
Ask the reward for the risk and the struggle—
Are we climbing for wealth? Are we searching for fame?

Only one answer has ever been given,
Laying the heart of the mountain-slave bare:
Yet it reads to the valley-bound ever a riddle:
“Why must I climb it? Because—it is there!”

DECORATION BY ROGER L. THOMAS

THE MAN THE BABOONS KNEW



He squeezed the trigger and squeezed again, and like an echo of the shots came a ragged roar from a hundred throats.

By PAUL ANNIXTER



DOUCK, the Dutch doctor, was working in his little laboratory at the back of his house on the serum that had occupied him for the past year.

In the single-windowed room that was always locked, he was busy among his tubes and retorts. The serum was the thing that was to make him, give him a name again in the outer world and remove

him from the oblivion of this South African town, where he ministered to ignorant Boer farmers. How he despised the life! But this hateful land with its cruel, barbed growths and its creeping and crawling deaths had netted him his great discovery—the antidote to all African poisons, even that of the fatal ringhals, the spitting cobra of the veldt. He had proven its

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL PIERCE

efficacy on a dozen different animals as well as upon his Kaffirs.

Holland would never have his discovery. Amsterdam, where they had shorn him of his license five years before and howled him out of the country, would not know him again. He would go to America and start afresh, with wealth and fame to work with him. First, he would collect a little debt, his debt with the public which had cast him off. Then he would live; not only use the wealth that would be his, but make it work for him. They would kowtow to him before he was done; the very ones who had made a "dop-doctor" of him.

A shadow passed across the small laboratory window, which he took to be the big dog-faced baboon that was chained in the yard. But footsteps sounded on the veranda and the voice of his assistant, Daggett, came from the front room.

"Are you there, sir? A bit of news you'll be wanting to hear."

"I'll be out directly," Douck called, but it was three or four minutes before he emerged from the laboratory, locking the door behind him.



DAGGETT stood waiting for him, bent-shouldered and slack-lipped, a tricky bit of English flotsam drifted God knew how from London. He was unkempt and none too clean, and one of his hands had been injured and was done up in a soiled rag. In Daggett, Douck had found material that was putty to his touch. For the wherewithal to keep in food and rum, Daggett was keen enough to keep a tight mouth about Douck's establishment and the unsavory work for which he was often hired.

"Somethin' you ought to know," repeated Daggett in a flutter of excitement, and he held out the crumpled page of a Hopetown paper.

"Devorken's got a pardon! He's been turned loose today! Says so in the pyper. 'Boer farmer,' it says, 'to go free after four years.' Lucky I come onto it."

Douck's heavy-lined face seemed gray in the fading light of afternoon. His Dutch phlegm broke down to the point of his turning his back abruptly on Daggett and striding to the distant window to read.

What Daggett said was true. The thing he had dreaded so long and dreamt about nights every few months. Douck read carefully and his little light eyes with their colorless lashes took on a piggy look from worry. Almost, he was betrayed into a normal Anglo-Saxon emotion, but it took itself out in a guttural muttering.

"Look where it says 'ow the case was reviewed by the English court an' 'ow they think Devorken was drove to desperation by malicious tricks—"

"Shut up," said Douck irritably. "I'm reading."

Daggett stood shifting apologetically from one leg to the other.

"Says he's comin' back to 'is old farm again," he pursued nervously after a minute. "Comin' in tonight. That means he'll likely get in to Hopetown about eight o'clock, comin' from the south like he is. Somethin' ought to be done about it. You ought to see the law an' get protection—"

"I'll handle this in my own way," said Douck, turning on his helper the pale stare the other could never endure for more than a moment. "The pith will be gone out of Devorken. He'll have had enough down there; he'll not be risking another stretch. Besides, the paper says he's got no idea of revenge."

"Wait till he finds out the whole truth," cut in Daggett, fidgeting under the other's direct gaze. "He's only human, an' when he finds out what happened to his wife— You'd better tyke a trip somewheres or come down to town an' stay."

"Pah, you make me sick," Douck grated. "Your guilty conscience is running away with you. Remember, you had a hand in it all. You helped egg him on. You poisoned his livestock. You swore to lies in court. You're in this as deep as I, as you'll find out quick enough if your tongue wags."

Daggett's face was like dough. He squirmed and shifted under the implied threat.

"But it ain't me Devorken threatened," squirted forth in weak defiance. "I was only warnin' you."

"Devorken is a broken man now. I'll look out for myself. See that you do the same."

Daggett circled about as if to edge out of range of the intolerable eyes. Always he had been coldly, creepishly drawn, yet

fearful and repelled. He reached the door but did not go. His lips worked with many suppressions. Douck noted the bandaged hand and general dishevelment.

"What is the matter with you? Been on another bender with that money I gave you?"

"S'help me, no." Daggett held up the bandaged hand. "Know where I got that? Comin' through the kloof road, less'n a mile from 'ere. Baboons, it was. Shied rocks at me from the cliffs an' one of 'em was a bloody good shot. I was ridin' along in bright sunlight, not a livin' thing in sight, mind you, an' all of a sudden there's a barkin' an' yammerin' an' the kloof is alive with baboons, a whole tribe of 'em, jacks, bucks an' marys, some with youngsters hangin' onto 'em. There'd been three or four of 'em hidin' behind every rock. The whole of 'em come leapin' down the cliff toward me, howlin' like a pack o' wolves an' gnashin' their big dog teeth. As soon as they get close enough they begin throwin' stones. Some of the big jocks rolled rocks down the cliff. The stones flew all around me, an' one sharp one ketched me in the 'and. If I hadn't a good 'orse under me, I might never a-got out o' there alive."

A faint sneer showed under Douck's short clipped beard, about the corners of the full lips where seemed to lie shadows of rapacious dreams. His eyes roved for a moment to the locked door of his laboratory. "Rubbish," he said.

"Anyhow, I'll bloody well be goin' home by the valley road," said Daggett with heat. "Well, I'm off."

He crossed the veranda and the doctor heard the sound of a horse's canter die away in the distance.



ALONE, Douck began herding the thoughts that swarmed up from his subconscious—no pleasant task. Devorken, coming back like something risen from the tomb, was a thing he had not reckoned with. It would take a bit of maneuvering to get around, too, alone as he now was with only a Kaffir girl about the place. If he had known there would be so little in it, he would have hesitated before driving Devorken to homicidal violence and subsequent court trial. Of gold there had been only a dribble, though it was known

that Devorken had been working a claim on his place for months. And Devorken's woman had made him no end of trouble.

She it was who had initially drawn Douck. Devorken had brought her out from the towns, it was rumored; from Johannesburg probably, where she had once been a barmaid. He had married her and retreated into the bush to consume her, as it were, like a dog with a bone, and veritably bury her. She had had three years of that when Douck came along and was struck by the sullen, sultry perfection of her. Three years of unrelieved toil conducted in the thick of a stony, unforgiving wilderness. The whole of her was numbed, half mad perhaps, from giving ear to this empty land and knowing no response. In her was a terrifying silence of soul that matched Douck's own.

At once she had roused in him an insensate desire that linked to all the things he had lost in the outer world. Her own response was like the inexorable process of indifferent nature, a mad, reckless stroke against the pressure of invisible tormenting forces. So the thing had been put through between them, with canny insight into the violent primitive nature of a man already "gone bush," as the saying had it. Devorken's reaction had been as exact as that of a specimen in one of the doctor's jars, but there had been a dark fatality about it all. The woman had only remained with him a few months. The shadow of conspiracy had hung between them. Rare while it lasted, but none of Douck's women had ever stayed long.

He sat now scowling across the veldt in the direction of Devorken's old place, so fallen into disuse that it was an indistinguishable part of the scenery at the base of the distant mountain. Devorken's old wagon and the farm machine he had had shipped from America, sunk into the ground in their own rot and rust, overgrown with brush and weeds. It had been between them that Devorken had barricaded himself and tried to hold out against the law at the last, after his attempted killing of Douck, for which the doctor had been prepared to the point of having witnesses on hand. Of the house itself and the odds and ends about the place, everything had been gutted by Kaffirs but the mud and reed-thatched walls themselves.

Devorken, the paper said, held no idea of vengeance. But one never knew. Men developed the devil's own guile in prison. He couldn't imagine Devorken getting white-blooded under any punishment. No melting the ice in that stubborn fanatical pate of his. He would be giving back hate for hate as he had before—or a little more, when he learned how his woman had gone steadily down and finally taken up with the captain of a tramp steamer bound for Australia. She might well have killed him in time, had things gone on as they were, but Devorken had married her, given her his name, and it would turn him into a white-eyed fury to learn the truth.

Dusk came on and Douck heard the Kaffir girl come in and start the evening meal. The baboon in the yard clanked his chain and coughed in anticipation of melon and mealies. Douck called sharply to the girl to make lights through the house and hurry her work. There would be no dawdling about the table tonight.

As he sat waiting, watching the moon's rim rising through the always mysterious mists of the veldt, like a ripe and heavy gourd, he thought of Daggett and his little shack down on the edge of Hopetown, and how he could be there within an hour if he chose, safe and unknown to any. He would not go, for he was ever one to carry out all things alone; yet another man feeling as Douck did, would have gone. For as darkness came on, he became perfectly convinced that Devorken would seek him out before the night had passed. He could foresee every move Devorken would make from the time he arrived in town; the moves most any man would make in his place.

He ate his meal without tasting it or uttering a word. Later he sat by the window again, watching the purple shadows the moon flung. A jackal yapped and cackled somewhere off toward Intaba mountain. It was like a jeering laugh to Douck's nerves, lacerated by thought and darkness. When the Kaffir girl came in to remove Douck's boots before going to bed, he told her harshly to get out.

No staying in that house through the evening, even with the lights out. He would have to find out what was afoot, see Devorken or someone who had seen him, before ever he would rest. He could wait out on the veranda for the visit he was

certain must come. . . . But better still, go face the man in the open; catch him unaware.

The idea came to ride down the valley for half a mile, close to the place where the road forked, one fork leading to Devorken's kraal, the other here. There he could see before being seen, find out what Devorken was up to. He'd go armed of course, draw aside into the thickets and wait with his old army pistol ready.



HE FOUND the pistol, a big Luger, wiped the dust from its flat haft, and saw to the shells. Slipping on his coat he went forth and saddled up. In a few minutes his mount was moving at a walk down the valley road, the only road that led from Hopetown. Devorken, if he came tonight, would have to pass him, if he headed either for his own kraal or Douck's home.

The veldt wind seemed alive as it always did. It filled the vast night; whispered in the dry grass and pressed down in sudden gusts that breathed of empty distance and remorseless beasts of prey out there not many miles away, beginning to prowl on their night's hunting.

The veldt stars glinted like pollen dust in the void of the sky, and the now risen and silvered moon gave him a weird blighted shadow as he rode. Once a hyena slunk across the trail a hundred feet ahead, scouting for death or refuse.

If Devorken were coming, it would be within the next few hours, and there would still be a moon. Plenty of moon to see by, so that a man sitting in readiness would have time to act, and light to shoot. Douck had been good in his day with a pistol, and little enough play he'd give Devorken. A single suspicious move, and tomorrow Daggett and two or three others would stand back of him and swear to a shot in self-defense.

He neared the fork in the road, and dismounting, led his horse well back into the thickets of yellow-bush and javelin, and tied him there. Far off beyond a hill the faint lights of the town showed. All things under the moon were unreal and dim out here, with black cut shadows. He sat down in one of the shadows and watched the road. He could see for a hundred yards down the valley. Not a chance of

missing Devorken if he came. But nerve-strain had made him tired. The soothing wind noises in the night made him long for sleep.

When he roused himself sharply some time later the moon was practically gone, everything darkened. High time Devorken should have come if he were coming at all.

Then as he stretched his cramped legs, something beside the wind moved in the dimness. Was it mice squeaking in the grass?

He strained his eyes and held his breath until a definite noise caused his hand to reach for the Luger, and a forefinger to crook around the trigger. The immobility of the plain beyond the road had changed a fragment of its light and shade; a sound drew near, faint but sustained like a vast sigh of breathing.

With a sharp intake of breath Douck was on his feet, the revolver ready, just as a harsh cry broke out near him. The cry, so sharp and unexpected, seemed to give life to a hundred related patches of indistinct shadow. The patches all moved, like a running rustle of leaves, and the man felt rather than saw a dim great bow of them flung out on the veldt around him, advancing slowly in soundless and threatening attitudes. They moved so subtly and crouched so still that he could define them not at all except for the concerted movement, but he knew. Every shadow was a baboon.

With a weakening feeling of horror the man backed slowly into the brush as he saw two white rings fixed directly in front of him, hanging apparently in the air. They seemed to float in the dim obscurity, moving slowly forward without sound, or visible movement. He waited as long as he dared, the sweat running from under his raised weapon arm, then fired, though he knew his life must end a moment afterwards. He squeezed the trigger and squeezed again, and like an echo of the shots came a ragged roar from a hundred throats, and a coughing threshing chaos amid the brush.

It was a long time before the band of chacmas drew back from the broken thing upon the ground, and moved slowly away toward the kloofs in long files, their shuffling pads whispering amid the dry grass.



NEXT morning Devorken, a pale changed man, riding out with a friend to have a peaceable understanding with Douck, came upon what was left of the doctor. A revolver lay on the trampled ground beside him, and half a dozen gruesome signs about the killing told that baboons had done the thing. But just why was not made plain until a new doctor came to take Douck's place two days later.

He took up his quarters in the house of his predecessor, but it was not until he forced the locked door of Douck's laboratory that light was thrown on the matter.

Within was found the customary paraphernalia of chemical research, but in a row of glass cases were several live and venomous snakes. In a chest in the corner of the room were found the skeletons of three baboons. And on a table beneath the window was strapped another baboon, muted but still alive, and shivering like a soul in torment.

"By Jove! Vivisection!" exclaimed the new doctor, a young Englishman. "I wonder what he was trying for, and why in the the name of Heaven did he choose baboons?"

In Douck's desk, under lock and key, he finally came upon the answer, the records of two years' experiment in therapeutic vivisection and the result: the anti-venene serum he had evolved, which was guaranteed to counteract the venom of the world's deadliest snakes. It was Douck's final gift, made willy-nilly, to a world he had loathed and defrauded.

"Strange," muttered the new doctor. "The creatures must have known and waited their chance to take revenge upon him."

He knew the grim code of the baboons of the veldt—to avenge a killed or injured comrade no matter what the cost. And sober, unimaginative chap though he was, before his mind's eye he seemed to see the grim chacma tribe out among the kloofs, whispering the news to one another, spreading the secret, possibly listening to cries at night from the laboratory or the summons of the tame baboon in the yard. Waiting and spying and never resting till their work of vengeance was complete and Douck had gone to his long last sleep.

*I slid halfway down
the pole in my safety
belt before I could
connect with my spurs.*





I slid halfway down the pole in my safety belt before I could connect with my spurs.

TRADE SECRET

By

ROBERT J. McCAIG

TO ME, Spider Arnott is a joy forever. He's getting along in years now, but what he hasn't seen in his day, he's read about. By his tell he is Old Man Electricity himself, and very few of us on the Northern Hydro system will disagree with him. So, having nothing to do this fine spring night, and knowing Spider was on the night trouble shift,

I wandered down to the substation. He was out on a call, so I sat down to chin a while with Frank Eager, the operator on duty.

In a few minutes the Spider came breezing in. He slung a hip on the desk, reached for the phone, and dialed a number. "Mack? Spider Arnott. You guys got a drop wire down back of 1716 Mallison. I coiled her up and hung her on the pole. Yeah? Sure—sure—no trouble. O.K., Mack."

He pronged the phone and turned to us with a grin. "Woman calls up a while ago, one of our wires is down in the alley, spitting sparks a foot long, hurry up and fix it before it kills a dozen people. I dash down, find the dame standing there wringing her hands, shoos the kids away from one of Ma Bell's telephone drops!"

"I suppose you gave her the ha-ha and picked it up bare-handed?" I asked with a smile.

He looked at me in amazement, as if he was kind of disappointed at my being so stupid.

"Hell, no, Johnny. That's against all the secret lore of the trade. Besides, the next time she saw a wire down, it might be shooting real instead of imaginary sparks, and she'd pick it up and get knocked on her fanny." He lit a cigarette, flicking the kitchen match with a thumbnail, and lineman-fashion, whipping it to his smoke, sulphur and all. "Nope, I put on my hooks, went up the Bell pole, fiddled around a bit with my pliers, and then came down and coiled up the wire. I thanked her and drove away, leaving her all agog at the brave lineman who in spite of danger to himself, saved the lives of anyhow a hundred people."

"Just what do you mean by the secret lore of the trade, Spider?" I asked, intrigued by the expression.

"Why, Johnny, you use it yourself.

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROGER L. THOMAS



TRADE SECRET

By
ROBERT J. McCAIG

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"I suppose you gave her the ha-ha and picked it up bare-handed?" I asked with a smile.

He looked at me in amazement, as if he was kind of disappointed at my being so stupid.

"Hell, no, Johnny. That's against all the secret lore of the trade. Besides, the next time she saw a wire down, it might be shooting real instead of imaginary sparks, and she'd pick it up and get knocked on her fanny." He lit a cigarette, flicking the kitchen match with a thumbnail, and lineman-fashion, whipping it to his smoke, sulphur and all. "Nope, I put on my hooks, went up the Bell pole, fiddled around a bit with my pliers, and *then* came down and coiled up the wire. I thanked her and drove away, leaving her all agog at the brave lineman who in spite of danger to himself, saved the lives of anyhow a hundred people."

"Just what do you mean by the secret lore of the trade, Spider?" I asked, intrigued by the expression.

"Why, Johnny, you use it yourself.

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROGER L. THOMAS



Ain't you been, say, playing cards with some outsiders, and squinted a judicious eye at the lights when they went dim and up again? And ain't you ever said, 'Wonder what the bump was? I bet we lost that tower line again.'"

"Quit reading my mail, Spider," I grinned. Because I *had* said almost exactly those words the other night at the Smiths'.

"Don't need to be ashamed, Johnny. We all do it. It's a part of the trade. Every kind of work's got stuff that's second nature to the insider, yet to the uninitiated they are mysteries past all understanding. A guy might shake his head at something we say, yet most of his own work would be just as foggy to us. But he never thinks of that."

"I know what you mean, Spider," Frank Eager said. "The other night a couple of railroad men were standing alongside me, having a beer and talking shop. One of 'em says 'You take one of these boys that's been pushing a yard goat, put him at the Johnson bar of a Mallet, and he sits there froze like a Chinese idol. I maintain, if you want to make a hoghead out of a man, you gotta get him out on the main iron.' Far as I was concerned, this fella could have been talking Greek."

Spider nodded. "Having been around quite some, I could translate that for you, but I ain't giving away their secrets, neither. Story I read once, sounded reasonable to me, about the Tower of Babel. You know, in the Bible. This tower was going to be so high that the engineers put the top ten stories on hinges to let the sun go by. All these guys was working on it, not for years, but generations. According to this story, the unions was tight those days, and after a hundred years or so, only the journeymen in each trade could tell what their buddies was spouting about. And it just got worse and worse until the job folded."

"Interesting, if true," I observed. "So, Spider, you feel that tonight you preserved some of the esoteric mysteries of the power business from the prying gaze of the outside world?"

"That's right. Take the trappings of mystery off any trade and who knows, maybe any dub could do it. But that ain't

all, it helps make routine work kinda special. You get so you know what the other guy is going to do, even what he's thinking. You get a kick out of the little jokes that only an insider can ever really understand.

"F'rinstance, imagine this—bunch of Aztec priests down in Tenochtitlan in the old days. They got their shift in, they're in the dressing room hanging up their feather robes, washing the gore off their hands. One of 'em's laughing fit to kill, and his buddy asks him the joke. He says 'Boy, you shoulda seen Cincocoyotl today. I laughed till I thought I'd fall off the teocalli. Good thing I had my mask on, or I'd of disgraced our order right in front of Montezuma.' . . . 'Wha happen?' his buddy asks. 'Well, they spread this big captive over the stone, and old Cinco splits the chest perfect. I gotta hand it to him, he's got as neat a stroke as there is in the business. But when Cinco reaches in to rip out the heart, it ain't there! You shoulda seen his face—I bet his jaw dropped a foot. Monty seen something was wrong, and his face clouded over like a thunderstorm. But just in time, Cinco fumbles around and finally gets hold of the heart and hoists her up. Get this—seems this captive was one of the rare cases where the heart is under the right ribs!'"

I shuddered. "Good Lord, Spider! You call that a joke?"

"It was to them," he argued seriously. "Just a funny happening in the day's work that you had to be on the inside to understand. Johnny, I tell you, to do a good job in our trade or any other you gotta be on the IN-side! I remember a case—"

The phone rang and Frank answered it. It was only a routine check by the dispatcher, and Spider relaxed. When Frank hung up, Spider had his facts assembled.

"Did I ever tell you about Buddy Gates and the calico cat?"



A FEW years ago (Spider began) there was a few openings in the line crews, due to transfers and so on. The brass picked up three or four young kids to start in as groundmen, hoping a

couple of 'em might stick it out and turn into decent linemen. Matter of fact, they weren't a bad bunch of boys, Freddy Croy was one of 'em—you know Freddy. But at the time a kid named Buddy Gates looked like the pick of the bunch. 'Bout nineteen, husky, good-looking, handled himself nice. Which he should of, having been a star in track and basketball at Morse High, even captain of the football team.

He went to work for us instead of taking any of the half-dozen college offers he got, mainly because he was in love with some little doll, and was scared that if he left, a local yokel might move in on him. I was rodding a gang at the time, and they gave him to me, and I thought I had a comer.

Well sir, the kid was quite a disappointment. Physically, he could hold his own with any of us, after he got toughened up a bit. But outside of that he was a plumb washout. Above his ears—oh, brother!

He wasn't dumb, y'understand. But he was in love, and he'd go off into daydreams at the most inconvenient times. I could be talking to him, and all of a sudden I would see that his thoughts were a thousand miles away, right while he was nodding and saying "Yessir" right at me. 'Nother thing, he'd been a big shot in school, and he couldn't seem to get over it. He was always trying to show he knew all the answers, but nine times outa ten he didn't take the trouble to be sure he was *right*.

Sure the kid wanted to be a lineman. That money looked good to him, and I suppose in his daydreams he pictured himself hiking a pole in a main alley with an admiring throng oh-ing and ah-ing. But he thought there must be a easy way, a quick way.

And you fellows know there just ain't no such rosy path.

I did my best with the kid. I talked to him serious, I kidded him, I took the hide plumb off him. But none of it worked. The next minute he'd turn around and pull some boner he shoulda known better than the first day he came to work. The man on the pole would holler down for some tool the kid should have had ready on the handline, and Buddy would be

standing there dreaming. When he did come to, he'd scurry around and usually come up with the wrong thing. One day Speed Miles got sore and dropped a through bolt whizzing past his dome, but even that didn't cure him.

But he sure didn't lack confidence. When Kenny Johnson moved up, darned if Buddy didn't come to me and ask for the apprentice spot in Kenny's place. I was so flabbergasted I sputtered when I told him he was years away, and if he didn't perk up, he wouldn't even be a grunt much longer. But the kid just laughed, and says, "Aw, you're kidding, Spider. You know I can lick any of those other guys. I'd like to see one of them make a ninety-five yard touchdown run like I did against Central."

I wanted to tell him that he wasn't playing any kid game now, but he honestly had me beat. I just turned around and walked away.

There wasn't any kick on the other three lads. Sure, they were green as spring clover, but they were getting to the inside of their trade. They spouted shop lingo, they argued about how to do different jobs, they asked questions. But Buddy Gates just stayed on the outside—when the other kids were arguing like professors about how to hook up a transformer, Buddy would fidget, and turn the talk to the next football season, or start bragging to everybody about Sharleen, his "chick."

Things got no better, and Buddy was on the edge of a pink slip when the whole thing came to a head. You remember when we switched the two lines, 3A and 3B, from fifty thousand to a hundred thousand volts? We had the new East Side sub finished, and just a few spans of 3A left to finish on the reinsulation. The idea was to cut the new sub over to 3A at a hundred thousand, leaving the old one operating on 3B at fifty thousand. Then we'd change the town circuits over to the new sub, which would clear 3B so we could reinsulate it in turn.

This Sharleen, Buddy's girl, only lived a couple blocks away from the sub, and this day when we went to work, darned if she didn't hit the job early in the morning, and hang around most of the day. She was a cute trick, shiny blonde hair

and big blue eyes. And most of the time the eyes were glued adoringly on Buddy Gates.

He expanded just like popcorn on a red-hot stove, and he took every chance to make like he was actually the pusher on the job.

The boys thought it was a good joke, they played right up, asking the kid for orders, conferring with him about the work.

Me? Oh, sure, I couldn't let down a cute little number like that. I went right along with the gag.

At quitting time, Buddy was right at my heels as I went to the phone booth to check in with the dispatcher. The blonde was still hanging around, and it's a wonder he didn't crowd right into the booth with me.

"Doug," I says to the dispatcher, "we're pulling off Number Three for the night. We ain't finished, the grounds are still on, so as long as you can't use the circuit, I'll hold my clearance overnight, and just check in tomorrow when we start work."

It wasn't strictly according to Hoyle, but Doug gives me an O.K. and I hung up. The kid strides alongside of me back to the truck.

He climbed in still swelled with importance, and gave Sharleen a nonchalant wave as we pulled away. "See you to-night, sugar," he yelled. I looked for the fellows to razz him, but darned if they didn't look kinda envious.



WE HAD a shot of line trouble that night. Just from force of habit, I dropped down here to the sub. It didn't really amount to much, and after it had been cleared up, I stuck around fanning the breeze with Pete Anderson, who was on the board. It was a little after ten when the door opened and in came Buddy Gates.

"Hello, Spider," he said. "Say, Pete, I just wanted to report that I rescued a cat from Number Three line tonight. Saved the night man an emergency call, I guess."

He was trying to hold back a grin of pride.

Pete pretended serious interest. He

picked up his pen and pulled the log sheet toward him.

"Very good, my boy. Give me the details, if you please."

"Well, I was up at Sharleen's, and her kitten got lost. It's a calico cat, and she thinks it's the cutest animal on four legs. We hunted around, but no sign of the darn little devil. I got a big flashlight out of my rod, and we went along farther. About a block north we heard something mewing, so I turned the light up the pole, and there on the crossarm was the calico cat. You know Sharleen only lives a couple blocks from the substation, so there's plenty of poles around.

"The cat was plenty high up, and Sharleen began to cry. A man can't let a lady cry, so I got in my rod and beat it home where I just happened to have a pair of hooks." (He wasn't fooling me any, I'll bet there weren't any more marshals' batons in the knapsacks of Napoleon's army than there are new shiny climbers in the grips of first-year groundmen.)

"So I beat it back, strapped on my hooks and belt, handed Sharleen the light and started up. She didn't want me to do it, because I didn't tell her the line was dead. But I knew it was Number Three and I heard you hold your clearance, Spider. I figured it was a good chance to be hot stuff in front of my girl, so I took it.

"I was a little shaky, but I made it nearly to the crossarm, and snapped my safety around the pole. The darn cat must have been glad to see me, because it gave one leap to my shoulder and dug in. Its claws were sharp as needles, and I flinched. My arm must have brushed the middle wire, because a big blue spark jumped at me. It stung and made me slip, and I slid halfway down the pole in my safety belt before I could connect with my spurs. Picked up a few splinters, too. But anyhow, the cat is safe, and Sharleen gave me a big kiss." He smirked at the memory, and added, "Maybe *now*, Spider, you'll give me a chance at that apprentice job!"

I didn't say anything. I was puzzled at his tale of heavy static on a solidly grounded line. Then I felt a sudden chill race up my spine.

"Kid," I said carefully, "tell me all

over again—just where was this pole you clumb?”

“Why, it was on Number Three, right at the corner of Thirty-fourth and Chapel. You know, across from that green filling station.”

Sweat sprang out on my brow. Pete Anderson and I turned our eyes at the same moment to the system diagram behind the desk. Then he turned to me with a wide and unbelieving stare. I nodded and sat down slowly, my knees were like water.

“Think hard, Buddy,” I said. “Do you know just what time it was when you came down that pole?”

“I know exactly,” he replied, proud as Punch. “It was just nine forty-one. I looked at my watch so I could give an accurate report.”

I shook my head, wondering at the devious ways of providence. I had explained the job to my crew step by step, like always.

But our friend Buddy Gates must have been having one of his pipe-dreams at the time.

I looked at Pete. “Should I tell him, or will you?”

Pete said, mighty grim, “I’ll tell him.” He stood up, grabbed the kid by the shoulder, and shoved him over to the big diagram, that one right there. He pointed his long finger at it.

“You see this line? That, Mr. Gates, is 3A, the circuit your crew was working on today. Note the green lights at each end of it. That means it is dead—dead because Spider here has a clearance out on it. You will note that it comes in from the north, straight down Thirty-third to

the substation.” He moved his finger. “Here, Mr. Gates, is 3B. You will note that it comes in along Chapel from the east. You will also note that the lights at each end of it are a pretty, bright red, showing that it is energized at fifty thousand volts.”

He turned and checked his log sheet carefully.

“Now, Mr. Gates, at nine thirty-five this evening a dragline working three miles east of town raised its boom too high and contacted a phase wire on 3B. The line kicked out and we had to do some checking, so it was nine forty-six before we got it back in service. And 3B happens to be the line which crosses Thirty-fourth at Chapel, not far from a green filling station!”

Pete’s professorial manner went down the drain, and he shook an angry finger furiously right under the nose of the startled kid.

“You damned little fool!” he screeched. “You climbed right up into a hot fifty thousand volt line. It was only by the grace of God and the luck of an utter idiot that you did it *in the only eleven minutes that circuit has been out in the past five years!*”

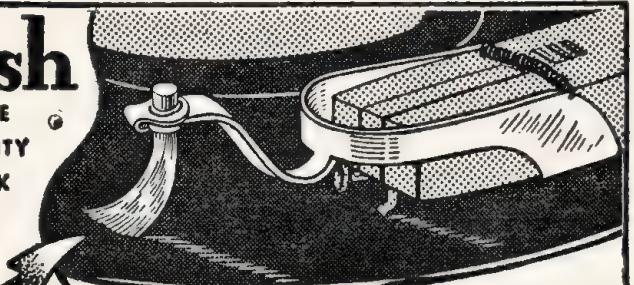
I couldn’t move fast enough to catch the kid when he fainted.

“So, you see,” Spider concluded, “the moral is if you want to get ahead in a trade, and stay alive, see that you get on the inside, and do it damn fast. Buddy Gates? Next time you’re in Lenhart’s, take a good look at the big guy behind the shirt counter. You’ll know him by the plume of white that runs right down the middle of his black hair.”

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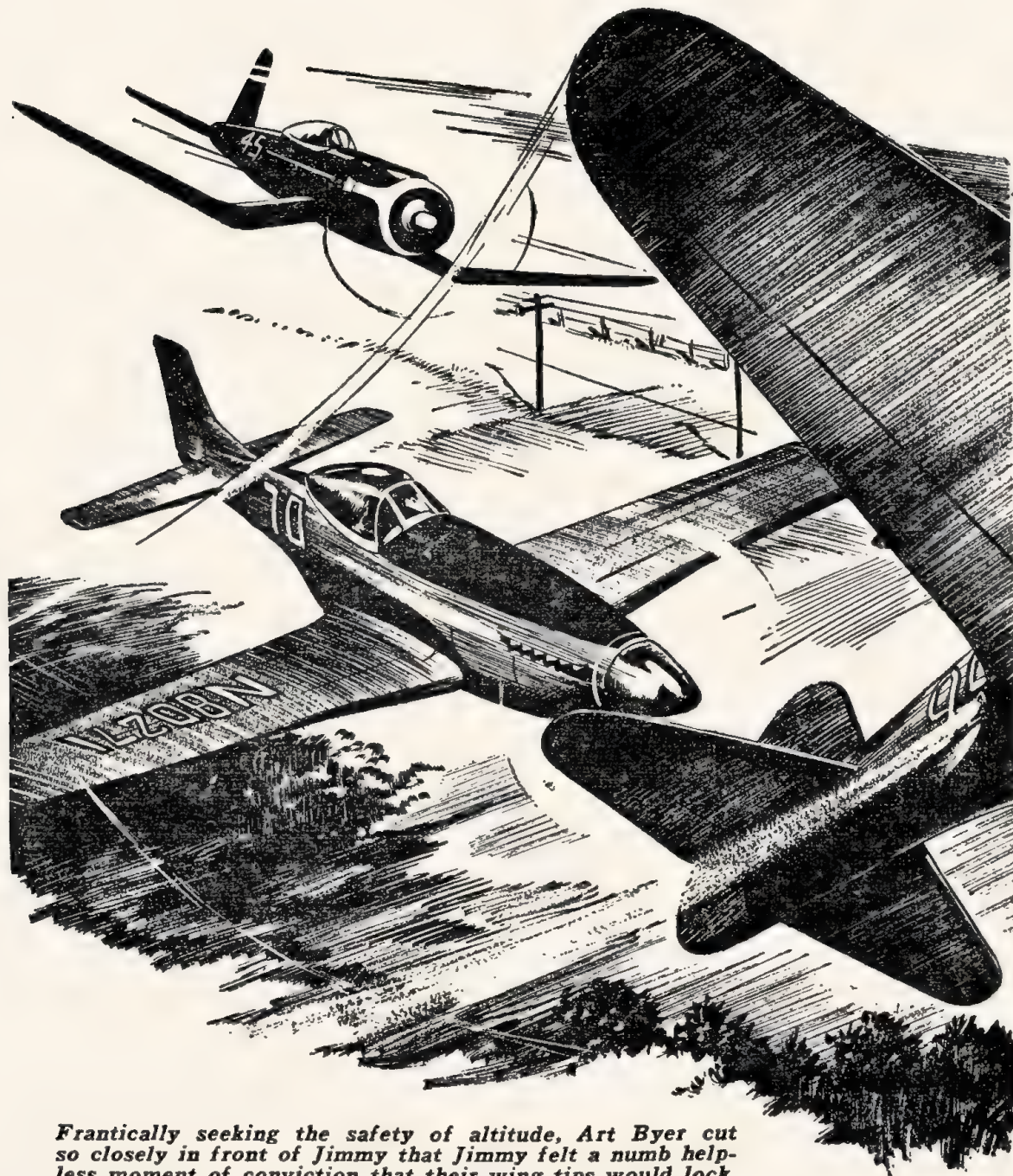
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ICEWATER PILOT

A Story of the National Air Races



Frantically seeking the safety of altitude, Art Byer cut so closely in front of Jimmy that Jimmy felt a numb helpless moment of conviction that their wing tips would lock.

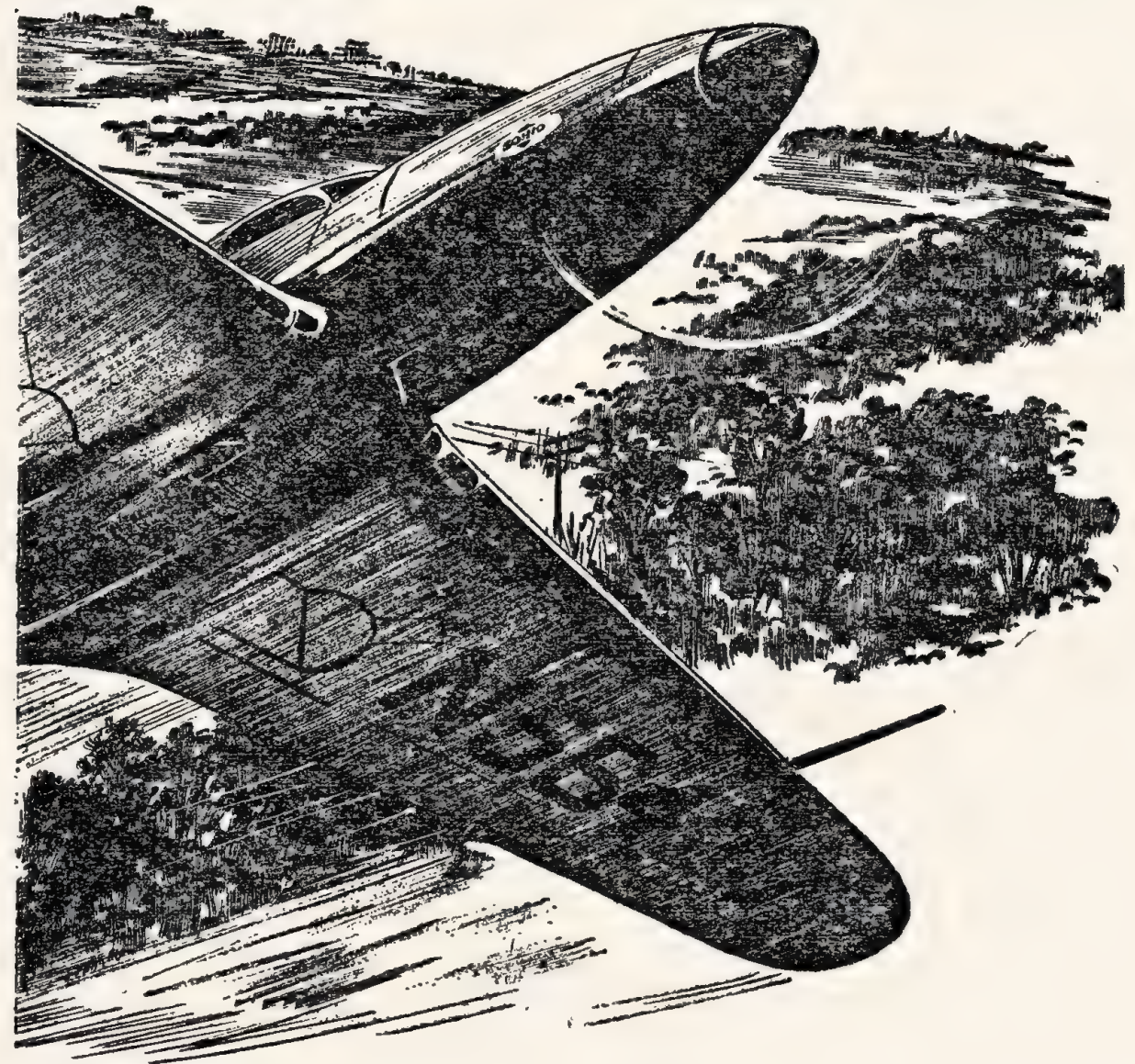
By FRED ALLHOFF

HE flew into Cleveland the day before the qualifying trials were to start and put the sleek, bright-orange, war surplus P-51 with the shortened wings down on the runway with no nonsense. And that was the first time any of them had ever seen him.

That, in itself, was unusual. Pilots, by the very nature of their profession, get around a lot. They talk even more—about their profession and those in it since there is, of course, no topic more interesting.

This one—the tall, tanned, thin-lipped fellow in his late twenties, with the dark, remote and somehow lonely eyes—was an exception. In answer to their self-introductions he said—briefly and coldly polite—that he was glad to meet them and that his name was James Cole (not Jimmy) and would they please excuse him, now.

He strode away, to check in, and from the waist down (slacks, woolen socks, comfortable brown loafers) he dressed



ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

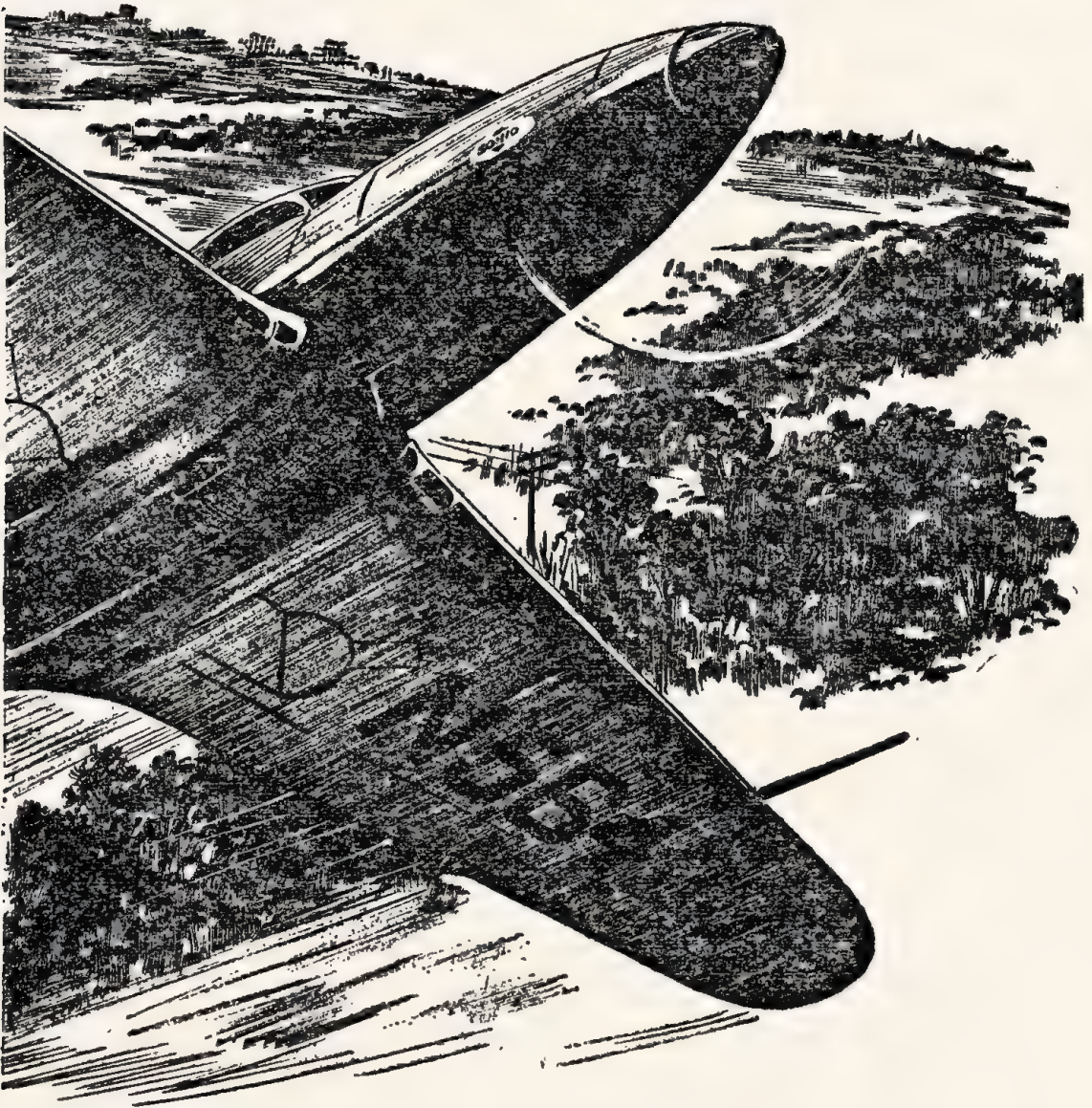
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ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

like the rest of them. His blue, Oxford cloth shirt, however, was warm for that blistering, late August afternoon, and he wore it with its long sleeves buttoned down over his wrists.

And, from the wrists on, were the gloves!

The black, four-and-a-half-inch cigarette holder they would have accepted. The fine, thin, black silk gloves they were to see him wearing constantly, were too much.

True, Pappy Selfridge who was in his fifties and still trying to cop a money prize each year in the National Air Races, affected jodhpurs, a waxed, pointed moustache and a short riding crop with which he had a habit of flicking his booted right calf. But then, Pappy was an old seat-of-the-pants flier of the flamboyant wire-struts days and they'd come to regard Pappy's theatricals with indulgent fondness and Pappy's flying skill with ungrudging respect.

Watching James Cole walk away, Chuck Ford, a test pilot entered in the race, said, grinning, "Maybe he burgles as a sideline."

The newcomer was as taciturn with the officials as he had been with his fellow fliers. He checked in, got his identification badge, quietly watched members of the technical committee weigh and inspect his plane. Later, he saw the orange P-51 safely housed in its place in a guarded hangar.

Then James Cole vanished from the airport as swiftly and efficiently as he had arrived at it.



HE WAS back early the following morning and they were jolted by recognition of the short, dour-faced, middle-aged man with him. Another quiet one! A man who conserved his jaw muscles for the tobacco he chewed.

But this one they knew. A man with deft, sure knowledge in his blunt, grease-stained fingers. Jake Weatherly—as fine a mechanic as ever set foot in a hangar.

They got Jake off alone and tried to pump him about James Cole and his plane. It didn't go very well. Jake grunted, "Never seen him before in my life until six months ago. Flew in out to the field

in Dayton where I was at, looked me up, made a deal, hired me." Jake spat a tobacco-juice period to the conversation and turned to go. Al White and Art Byer grabbed Jake.

"Come on, Jake. Give! What about this guy?"

Jake grinned and shifted his cud.

"Ask him. Three-fifty an hour and expenses he pays me. No promises, like some of you Sunday pilots. Cash on the line. To work for him, not talk to you."

They didn't, however, ask James Cole much of anything. The cold, black, polite eyes and air of withdrawn aloofness held them—all of them—quietly at arm's length. They did uncover a few meager facts: he'd flown from a carrier during the war, then for a Latin-American line; finally, crop dusting in southwest Florida.

It was Skeet Lavelly who saw Cole when he was not wearing the black gloves. Skeet—the friendliest and most likeable of them all—who walked up to the orange P-51 when Cole and Jake were working on it.

Cole straightened, grabbed a handful of waste, wiping greasy hands but ignoring Skeet's outstretched hand.

"Do you mind?" he asked quietly. "We're pretty busy."

Skeet took the brush-off in good humor and told the rest of them, "Something wrong with his hands. All scarred."

So they didn't hold the black gloves against him after that. A man had a right to be sensitive. And they respected him for being canny enough to hire Jake Weatherly. Then, too, Jake—who was independent as hell—wouldn't work for a guy who didn't have his good points.

They were still prepared to like him if he would let them—and to respect him, if he could fly.

He could fly. He took the P-51 up the next afternoon to qualify. They were all on hand. Al White, whose speedy, sponsored blue Corsair was favored to win the Thompson that year, was lazing around in a borrowed Cub at 2,000 feet above and south of the course where he could watch Cole as an eagle watches.

Cole took off, flew around the course, tried a few turns and came back low, wiggling his wings before the judges' stand in the grandstand to indicate that he was ready to attempt the first of the

three qualifying trials allowed contestants. He turned back, then, pulling the orange Mustang sharply up to get height for a diving run, turned again and came roaring down over the starting line.

He was supposed to fly two laps. He pulled out and off the course at the end of his first lap, came in and landed. Al White asked, later, "What happened?" And Skeet Lavelly said, "I heard him tell Jake he went wide on Three Pylon."

"Maybe *he* calls it wide. Maybe he was five feet wide. He flew that course tighter than a tick in a dog's ear. It looks like we got a perfectionist on our hands. You know," Al White said thoughtfully, "I think that guy's gonna give us trouble in the race."

James Cole, the dark horse, gave them trouble. But most of it came before the race started.

He qualified next day and his speed of 401 miles per hour cinched him third place behind Al White's 420 and Chuck Ford's 410.

That was the day—on the second lap of his qualifying trial—that Jerry Walker, a nice guy and a smart, race-wise flier, flew into the ground at 400 an hour just beyond Number One Pylon while they stood there, helpless and unbelieving. Jerry's plane—what was left of it—burned and Skeet Lavelly saw Cole, standing alone and to one side as usual, turn from the sight of the blazing ship—his tight, cold face suddenly sick and white and pained. The others saw his face, too, when Skeet went over to him. He was human in that moment and they were prepared to like James Cole when they heard Skeet ask quietly, "You all right, Cole?"

Cole seemed to sway a minute on his

feet, his face still chalk-white. The dark eyes glared at Skeet and his voice rasped, "Leave me alone, will you?" He turned his back on Skeet and walked, unsteadily, away. And somebody muttered, "What a stinker! It has to be the nice ones, like Jerry, who get it."

So they were finished with being ready to like him and they left him strictly alone as he left them alone. He came to none of the social events planned, for pilots and their wives and friends, each evening. He didn't even live at the hotel where most of them were quartered, preferring to share a double room in a strictly third-rate hotel with Jake—a man who liked to hang onto a dollar himself.

Cole got into a run-in—one-sided and of his own making—with Tony Wood, the nicest of the newspapermen covering the National Air Races that year. He refused, flatly, to pose for pictures with or without other pilots entered in the race. When Tony tried to pry a little background out of him, he snapped, "Here's all you need to know. They've got sixteen thousand bucks up for the winner. That's what I'm here for. Not racing, not setting records, not publicity."

"An honest man," said Tony agreeably. "Do you mean you don't like flying?"

"I didn't say that," snapped Cole, "though I'd expect you to twist the words in my mouth. What I don't like, since you're so curious, is newspapermen."

"Just a moment, Cole. I had no intention. . . ." Red-faced, Tony Wood watched Cole walking off.

That was the first time Jake stuck his oar in, "You hadn't ought to done that, Jimmy," he remonstrated mildly. "Tony's an all-right—"

Message from Garcia

Texas Artist Tells Why It's
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SAN ANTONIO, Texas—Tony R. Garcia, San Antonio artist and illustrator, knows that it's *taste* that counts in a whiskey. "Tell everybody," he says, "that I switched to Calvert because of its *mild, and smooth taste.*"



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"He's a newspaperman!" Cole said between tight lips.

Jake let it go at that, pondering without result, the scalding bitterness that Cole got into those few words.



THE incident that cooked James Cole with all of them took place after the pilot's meeting the day before the big race. Cole had attended those meetings, sitting alone and quiet in back. Chuck Ford made the proposal.

The proposal was a purse for the widow of Jerry Walker, who had crashed in the qualifying trials. There were twenty laps in tomorrow's 300-mile race and the individual holder of the best time for each lap received \$100—a total of \$2000 in lap prize money.

"The lap money," Ford explained, "won't make or break any of us and Jerry's wife is in a tight fix and expecting a baby. How about all of us who are in this pledging half of any lap money we win to a fund for her? That'll make a thousand bucks—and Tony says his newspaper will match it with another thousand. All in favor . . . ?"

The hands shot up.

"Looks like it's carried, then." He frowned. "Or is it? You want to say something, Cole?"

For the first time, at one of their meetings, Cole was on his feet, white and defiant, his jaw muscles rippling before their curious, turning heads. His voice shook, but his low words were insistent, and perfectly clear: "I'm sorry, but you'll have to count me out."

A hostile murmur rose in the room and above it, calling for quiet, Chuck's ham-like hand pounded wood.

"I see," said Ford quietly—and smiled. "Or—rather—I don't see. The trouble with this deal, Cole, is that it's not exactly fair unless all of us are in on it."

Cole was on his feet, white and defiant: "I'm sorry, but you'll have to count me out."



Your business is your business, but if you could possibly stretch a point..."

"Sorry. Count me out." Cole turned to go: If he had gone, it might still have been all right because there wasn't by now, a man in that room who wasn't pondering the possibility that Cole had desperate, if unknown, reasons for his refusal. And, similarly, every man in that room was asking himself whether he—in Cole's place, however urgent the reasons—would have had the plain courage publicly to say no. Not once, but twice!

But Cole didn't leave the room at once. His black eyes lighted balefully upon Tony Wood and he rubbed his chin with a black-gloved hand and he said, bitterly, "Is this a pilots' meeting or a newspaper meeting? This was your idea, wasn't it? Your paper kicks in a thousand bucks. But what are *you* kicking in, Wood?"

And, without waiting for an answer, he strode out.

That should have been enough. But there was more. Duke Freeman, a commercial pilot on an East Coast run flew in that afternoon to attend the next day's races. And saw James Cole and said, "I read his name, but I didn't think it would be the same Cole. Don't you guys know who *he* is?"

And that was how, the day before the race, the story got its start. It mushroomed, covering the airport, spawning cold off-sets of contempt until Jake, hearing it for the third time, felt some of that contempt directing itself at him.

"What," Al White's mechanic demanded of Jake, "makes a guy like you work for a heel like him?"

"His dough's as good as anyone else's," said Jake placidly. "And paid promptly."

The other man shook his head.

"There's a limit to how bad anybody needs dough," he said pointedly.

They sat, that night, in a cheap and cheerless hotel room, following a cheap meal in a diner. Jake Weatherly and James Cole.

The older man sat, absorbed, in a study of his grease-rimmed nails.

"What in the hell *am* I doing here?" he thought. It wasn't the money, promptly paid, that held him to James Cole. What was it? He'd been living in the same room with him for days. And what did he

know about him? That he talked little. (Jake approved of that.) That he hung onto his money. (Jake approved of that, too—a trait not many fast-spending pilots had.) He brushed his teeth twice a day, bathed regularly, lived in a state of almost ascetic neatness.

And had icewater in his veins. Or did he? Now and then Jake had looked up to find in Cole's eyes—black as the gloves he wore—loneliness that was like a hunger. But nothing Jake had been able to say or do had been good enough to break through the quick reserve that came instantly on guard when Jake tried to steer the conversation into personal channels. Jake, suddenly aware that Cole had spoken to him, grunted, "Eh?"

"Jake," said Cole. "I've got to knock off first place money. Or at least the eight thousand for second. Give it to me straight. What are my chances?"

Jake sighed. They all asked that, of course, the night before. But that was all this one thought of—money.

"The plane's as good as it'll ever be and that's good enough. And you're good. In 300 miles you might even make up the difference in speed between your plane and Al White's by better flying. Provided Al flies lousy. Which he won't."

"It doesn't matter how he flies," Cole interrupted confidently. "His ship dropped two exhaust stacks in two laps on the trials. You said, yourself, if it does that in two it won't hold together for twenty. I'm not worried about him. And I can whittle Ford down in twenty laps."

"Maybe. What about Pappy Selfridge?"

"Are you kidding? He qualified ninth—last place—in the trials."

"Sure, but he's done a lot of racing. While some of you 400-mile-an-hour jack-rabbits are blowing your engines up Pappy will be cruising along back there at three-eighty-five making every turn just like it says in the books. Every time you look over your shoulder, there'll be Pappy. He's race-wise. And how much racing have you done?"

"Just that once I told you about," Cole admitted. "For peanuts, against four other guys as green as myself at a county fair. But I got the feel of it—of racing."

"Maybe. The Thompson ain't no county fair."



JAMES COLE shrugged.

And, for the first time since Jake had known him, grinned.

Jake watched with interest, liking him instinctively in that moment, as the grin dissolved the taut lines in his lean face and transformed it into something quite boyish and warm.

"You know," said Cole reminiscently, "I spent a month flying all over southwest Florida looking for four dead pine trees spaced like pylons at the corners of a fifteen-mile quadrangle. I finally settled for three and a barn and I bought all the ducks and chickens this farmer had so he wouldn't squak about my flying that course. If I flew it once, I flew it a thousand times."

The lean face grew as coldly analytical as that of a man adding a column of figures.

"I can fly the course, tomorrow, tighter than any of them. I've got the second best plane in the race. And I've got the best mechanic on the airport. I'll knock down that sixteen grand, tomorrow."

Jake, quite suddenly, had enough. He was full up. And mad. All he—Jake—meant to Mr. Icewater, here; all their rather pleasant weeks of working together to perfect a winning ship meant to Cole was sixteen thousand dollars. This guy, in the creepy black gloves, just wasn't human.

"Maybe you'll win tomorrow and maybe you won't," Jake said bitterly. "You're forgetting the one guy that's got you licked."

The black eyes looked up, sharply cold. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"You!" snapped Jake. "You've gone out of your way to make every living person on this field hate your guts." Cole expelled a breath of relief—and that made Jake still more mad. "You can't kick people in the teeth and not expect them to kick back. Tony Wood. . ."

At the mention of the newspaperman's name, Cole stiffened. With incredible speed he was on his feet and over to the chair in which Jake sat. His face was white and furious and the black gloves fastened suddenly in the loose folds of Jake's shirt.

"What can he do? I paid my entry fee. I qualified. He can't get me kicked out

of the race tomorrow. He can't, can he?"

Jake looked, with satisfaction, at the sheer panic that had come into Cole's eyes.

"Get your hands off me, sonny," he said contemptuously. And Cole took the black-gloved hands away and muttered, "I'm sorry. But he can't get me tossed out of the race, now, can he?"

"Can't and won't. Tony's no heel. But what makes you think he could?"

Cole paused, then turned away.

"Let's skip it, Jake."

"Let's not skip it. A guy flew in today that knows you. Tells an interesting story. Seems there was a mechanic named Sonny Dawson—nice fellow with a wife and three kids—beating out a living at a two-bit airport in a little East Coast Florida town—Hollandville. This Sonny Dawson was doing some work in the cockpit of a Cub one afternoon and a dope of a pilot walked into the hangar with a live cigarette in a holder. Dropped it in a puddle of gasoline under the Cub. The Cub puffed into a bonfire—with Sonny Dawson in it. They say sixty percent of him got burn scars and he was supposed to die that night. Seven months ago. Only—somehow—they're still keeping him alive and the pilot ducked across the State and set up as a crop duster.

"So now this pilot's entered in the race tomorrow. And thinks he's going to cop the race and sixteen grand. A guy without a friend in the world. A guy that no other pilot wants to win. A guy that hasn't got so much as a postcard from somebody—anybody—wishing him luck. You can't win that way. Not without somebody, somewhere, to wish you well."

Jake looked at James Cole, feeling almost sorry for him in that moment. And added, quietly, "Stories have a way of being wrong. Maybe that story about Sonny Dawson. . ."

"It's true," Cole said hollowly. "It happened just like you said." A black-gloved hand went into his pocket, came out with a thinning roll of bills. "You're telling me that you're through with me, too. I owe you for three days. . ."

"Damn it!" exploded Jake. "Put that dough away. I made a deal. I'll not walk out on you. There are two sides to every story, Jimmy. If you want to tell me. . ."

For just a moment James Cole's face

softened and loneliness and hope leap-frogged in his dark eyes. And then the invisible armour of reserve surrounded him and he said, coldly business-like, "One thing, Jake: I appreciate all you've done and I couldn't win tomorrow if it hadn't been for you. I'd sure like to give you a bonus when I win, but I won't be able to. I think we ought to hit the sack, now."

CHAPTER II

DEBT OF HONOR



JAKE lay in the darkness thinking that you could take something complicated, cold and efficient—like an engine—and you could take it apart and find out what made it tick. Or not tick. But when you got a man—scarcely more than a boy, at that—complicated, cold and efficient...

Jake listened to Jimmy Cole's breathing and sensed that he wasn't asleep, either.

"He'll get there, though," Jake assured himself. "Probably layin' there, now, countin' dollar signs."

But neither of them got there. And, at two in the morning in that drab, dark hotel room, James Cole flew apart. He went to pieces like he did everything else—swiftly, efficiently and thoroughly.

Before Jake could get the light on, he heard the bed springs. They were making one hell of a noise. When Jake did get the light on, he almost wished he hadn't. James Cole lay on the twin bed and the bed was shaking and the sheet over Cole was shaking and Cole was shaking—every inch of him. His face was white and con-

torted and he had his lower lip between his teeth and Jake gave him the flat of his hand across the face to make him let loose before he bit into it. And, even as Jake scrounged in his battered suitcase for the half pint he had somewhere in it, he heard Cole moan, "I can't lose. I can't! I won't!"

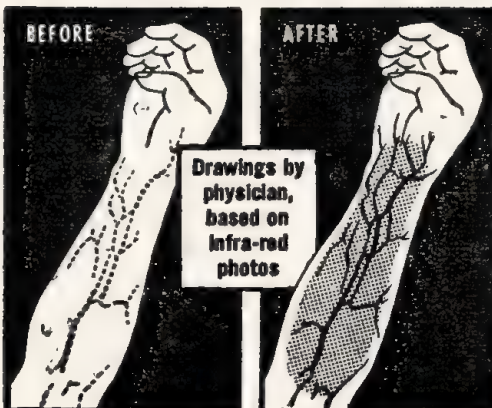
Jake took the bottle to the bathroom, slapped a glass one third full of whiskey and, just to add to the confusion, their room buzzer went off then.

It was a telegram addressed to "James Edward Cole, National Air Races, Cleveland" and Jake supposed they'd had to call every hotel in town before they found this flea-bag. He gave the telegram to Cole, who ripped open the envelope and read it. Jake shoved the whiskey at him, grunting, "Get this into you."

Cole shoved it way. "I won't need that, now, Jake."

He didn't need it, either. All the shaking had stopped. And there was a sudden light in his young, handsome face. A light from within, awesome as sun shining through the biggest stained glass window in the world. And the first happiness Jake had ever seen in those dark eyes, glowed there triumphantly, warmly. James Cole read the telegram again, greedily, eagerly and happily, before putting it aside. And Jake saw a tear leave the corner of one eye and roll, unnoticed, down his lean cheek. James Cole said, "It's O.K., now, Jake. I'll win. You said nobody could win without somebody, somewhere, wishing them luck. I've got two people wishing me luck. Two, Jake!"

Jake had never messed with anyone's mail or telegrams before. And Cole hadn't



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offered to show him this one. Jake didn't care. He reached over and took it and read it: ALMA AND I BOTH PRAYING FOR THE GRANDEST GUY IN THE WORLD TO WIN TOMORROW.

The telegram came from a town called Hollandville and it was signed: *Sonny Dawson*.

Cole *wanted* to talk, then. And Jake, wanting to listen, listened.

"All I meant to do that day, Jake, was to ask Sonny to have a look at my carburetor. I'd never even seen Sonny Dawson or Hollandville before until I landed there that afternoon. I got out of my ship and lit up a cigarette. In this same holder I've been using. I talked to some guy and he said Sonny was a good mechanic and a good guy.

"I started for the hangar—and I'd have sworn that cigarette was out. That's no alibi. It was up to me to see that it was out. I didn't. I even saw the pool of gas under the wing tip. And, unthinkingly, ejected that butt—a live butt—right into it. I hadn't said half a dozen words to Sonny. One minute I'm thinking what red hair he's got and what a friendly smile. The next I'm trying to jump back out of those flames and the whole inside of that ship is red as his hair and he's screaming.

"I helped yank him out—though we couldn't reach him right away—and roll him in a tarp and then I got sick, just seeing him, and they hauled us both off to the hospital. They had a doctor there. Young guy. Ex-Navy. Been on a carrier and was interested in burn cases. Funny thing. This doctor had the same name as the one in the movies—Doctor Kildare. He took one look, said Sonny wouldn't last the night out and went to work. I was wishing about then, he'd say that about me.

"I got some dirty looks out of everybody—except Sonny and his wife and this Doc Kildare. I had 'em coming to me. They had a paper in that little town—and they all liked Sonny. So, next day, the paper beat my brains out. They said what I did was stupid, criminal negligence. It was, too. I know that. I had it coming. Anything they could call me. Or do to me.

"And then, the next day, Sonny was still alive. That's when I doped it out.

What I had to do. I had to buy Sonny back his life and keep his wife and those three kids on their feet. I had a hell of a debt to pay off. And you know what that newspaper guy did? I had an application in with three commercial airlines. He queered me on all three, when I needed the dough to give Doc. I went and saw him and tried to reason with him and all he did was yell I ought to be horse-whipped. I've hated newspaper guys ever since. I got a plane and went across the State and crop dusted, but I can't make enough money at that for what I need.

"It's cost nearly four grand at the hospital so far. Plasma, skin grafts, splints to keep Sonny's legs straight. You know what they use for a pressure dressing? Mechanic's waste. Doc's been swell. Sonny and his wife don't hold anything against me—and he'll have maybe five months more of it.

"I lost a girl in the deal. We were going to be married. She said if I didn't pay any more, the hospital would pull him through now. I suppose they would, but it wasn't the hospital's job. I can't see it her way, so we broke up. A debt's a debt and I aim to put Sonny's life back the way it was before I messed it up."



JAKE sat there, listening, and suddenly James Cole took his two restless hands—ungloved—from beneath the sheet and held them out and Jake swallowed and averted his eyes from the misshapen, ugly scar tissue that burns had put there.

"Sonny's face is like that," Cole said quietly. "And when he's well enough for plastic surgery . . . Those are the boys that really come high, Jake. That's why I can't promise a nickel—even if I win the whole sixteen thousand—to a fund for Jerry Walker's widow or anyone else; that's why I can't even give you a bonus. You've been good to me, so I'm glad, now, you know. Only I can't explain this to the others. And I want your word that you won't. Sure, everybody makes mistakes. But when you make a mistake that almost kills a man, anything you've got to say is going to sound like an alibi." Cole's chin lifted. "And I don't pass out alibis."

He had taken up the telegram and was reading it a third time. With a grin on his

face and that sharp loneliness gone from his eyes. Before he turned out the light, Jake cleared his throat and said quietly, "Just for the record, Jimmy, you got *three* people pulling for you tomorrow."

"Thanks, Jake," said Jimmy Cole. "You can cop a bet on me tomorrow. I'll win it, Jake. There isn't anything, now, that can stop me!"

When Jake awoke at six in the morning it was to see Jimmy Cole, clad in his shorts, standing at the window of their room.

"How's the weather?"

Jimmy turned, grinned. The more he saw of it, the more Jake liked that grin. And Jake's sharp eyes noted, approvingly, that with only three or four hours of sleep the kid looked all right. Jimmy shrugged.

"Wind out of the northwest. And pretty gusty. Going to be a little rough down there on the ground, but they'll be bouncing as hard and often as I will."

They drove out to Cleveland Airport well ahead of the Labor Day thousands who would attend the races. At the airport, they went directly to the commercial hangar and began the slow, tedious ritual of filling the aluminum wing tanks with the 90 gallons of water-alcohol mixture needed for water injection. They filled the ship's three tanks with 280 gallons of gasoline, a special 200-octane racing mixture that cost one dollar a gallon. Then, just to play it safe, they pulled the week-old battery and replaced it with a new one.

With nothing left to do, Jimmy gave the sleek orange plane a thorough polishing with a charmois.

Jake asked, "What about a G-suit?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"I'm busted, Jake. Flat. Enough for you and the hotel bill. Pappy Selfridge and Byers, I hear, aren't bothering with G-suits. I won't need one."

Jake didn't like it, he thought. Selfridge and Byers were old-timers. Gravity didn't seem to bother them. But a G-suit—a suit resembling a coverall type flying suit, that ran off a vacuum pump hooked into the airplane system, whose air-pressure bands tightened up on your stomach when you needed it to keep the blood there—could be handy.

"I know where I can get one for fifty bucks and I'll loan you the fifty."

"Thanks a lot, Jake, just the same. I went around those pine trees mighty tight." Jimmy Cole consulted his watch. "Race is at four-thirty and we have to be on the line by two-thirty. We'd better have lunch."

"I'll buy you your lunch, just for luck," said Jake. "Besides, you hot-shots don't eat much before a race."

Jimmy fooled him. He ate a good lunch, slowly and calmly. It wasn't until after his second cup of coffee that he showed signs of nerves. They all did. They had to make sure that the man with the tractor who was to tow their planes out to the starting line wouldn't vanish, tractor and all. They shook hands, Jimmy grinning wanly and saying, "Keep your fingers crossed, Jake," and Jake, answering simply, "God go with you, kid!"

Walking away, Jimmy turned, once, to wave a black-gloved hand at Jake. And a lump rose in Jake's throat. Over the years, he'd helped a lot of them ready their sleek, deadly planes for this dangerous event. They were nice lads—almost all of them. But he discovered, now, the lump mysteriously real in his throat, that he'd never wished, more fervently, for any of them to win.

His part of it was done and Jake strolled far out into the field where, facing the grandstand, he could watch start and finish of the race. He had thoughtfully provided himself with a leather cushion and he tossed it on the grass and sat down on it. He frowned, watching the grass bend under whipping gusts of wind. It was going to be rough.

After a while the tractors began pulling the racing ships to the starting line where they would wait, lined up for their race-horse start. He saw the orange P-51 being towed into third position. After a while, he saw a darker and smaller outline against the plane. Standing quiet and alone. That would be Jimmy.

The rest of them were in clotted little conversational groups and Jake, angrily, hooked a finger into his cheek and yanked out a wilted mass of tobacco and replaced it with a fresh chew.

They were leaving Jimmy Cole strictly alone and—even at that distance—Jake could feel the razor-sharp edge of their contempt, their dislike. They hated Jimmy

Cole's guts. They had him pegged for a tightwad. And a careless, callous guy who'd set fire to another human.



SITTING there, feeling Jimmy Cole's loneliness. Jake wanted to go over to the starting line and give them all a piece of his tongue—and the truth. Especially Art Byer, a good flier but inclined to be an emotional hot-head. Only how could you tell them—or anyone—what you had come to learn, in confidence, when shock had smashed the last, crumbling defenses of Jimmy Cole's reserve and dignity?

They were wrong—all of them—to turn their contempt upon Jimmy. They were wrong not to guess that it was not the man who was behaving badly (as he seemed to have behaved) but the hurt within the man that made him, instinctively, react as he did.

Jimmy was no less wrong. Jake could understand his needless rudeness to Tony Wood; his distrust of all newspapermen. He could understand the black gloves, fending off the necessity of explanations which might not be believed.

But Jimmy was wrong to lone-wolf it; to isolate himself; to assume that all people could not and would not understand.

Jake sighed. He didn't know what he could do about it. He saw a figure—unrecognizable at that distance—walk past the orange plane against which Jimmy leaned and raise a hand in careless greeting. Jake's heart swelled and he followed the moving figure until it halted before a black King Cobra. So it was Skeet—Skeet Lavelly—an amiable and happy-go-lucky towhead, who'd had the decency to give Jimmy a casual hello. And Jake felt still better when, a moment later, he saw Pappy Selfridge, in the inevitable jodhpurs, go over and exchange a few words with the kid. Jimmy wouldn't have to go into the race, now, feeling like a leper.

It was nearly race time and Jake saw the official starter take his place out before the line-up of waiting planes and the pilot groups breaking up as each man walked to his racing ship.

That was when Tony Wood, the news-

paperman, came out to where Jake was sitting.

"I've been looking for you, Jake," said Tony. "That story about this boy of yours—Cole—has started making the rounds. You know, the mechanic that almost burned to death at Hollandville. Well, I've checked it out. And brother, have I got a story."

Jake swallowed and, against the biting trickle of tobacco juice, attempted an expression of bland innocence. Then decided against it. Tony was too good a newspaperman to fool easily.

"You aint gonna dig that up and beat him over the head with it, are you? Look, the way it happened..."

"I know how it happened. I've been on the phone. I've talked to the hospital at Hollandville. All of 'em. Doc Kildare, the super, the mechanic who was burned—Sonny Dawson—his wife. All of them who know the facts. And that local newspaper editor. He's straightened out now and he's already setting up a front page with Cole as winner. It's a national story—and it's my baby. Here's a dark horse, flying in the Thompson, to win enough money to buy a man a new face. I just don't want to get scooped on my own yarn, so give it to me straight, Jake. Has Cole got a chance to win?"

Jake sat there a minute, listening to happiness sing inside him. Then he weighed his answer. Then he said, "If he doesn't get any tough breaks my boy's a natural to take second and he could win."

"Thanks, Jake," said Tony, turning to start back for the stands; turning to hide the grin he couldn't repress over the proud way Jake had called Cole "my boy."

Jake got up off the cushion. He was too excited, now, to sit. On the starting line, the waiting planes had gotten the one-minute flag and they were trembling there expectantly, their revved-up motors roaring deafeningly.

A fellow mechanic, trailing two women, came out to watch the race from Jake's vantage point. Briefly, Jake noted that the man was Hal Watts, Art Byer's mechanic. One of the women was Watt's girl; the other, Grace Byer, Art's wife. Watts said, "Who's your dough riding on, Jake?"

Jake didn't care much more for Hal than he did for Art Byer.

"Cole," he said briefly. "Who else?"

"You're out some money," sneered Hal Watts. "He can't win!"

That "can't win" suddenly made Jake's blood freeze. That and the knowing look that went with it. Hal Watts was a show-off. He liked to be important. Especially when women were around. Jake, counting on that, insulted him thoughtfully.

"Nothin' like having some grease-monkey give it to you right outa the feedbag. We're all listenin'. Who's the winner?"

"I don't know," snapped Watts darkly. "I didn't say I knew who'd win. But I know who ain't gonna win. Maybe you remember Ferguson back in . . ."

Jake felt the cold fingers of apprehension trip along his spine, felt the blood leave his face. So that was it!

Jake remembered Ferguson, all right. Ferguson had showed up for the Thompson one year back in the thirties in a plane that outclassed every other plane entered by such a wide margin that it was strictly no contest. So the other boys had decided to make a contest out of it.

It only took a couple of them to do it, in the first half of the first lap. They crowded Ferguson on a turn, forced him to cut a pylon, adding an extra twenty-mile lap to the distance he must cover. That deadly, dangerous maneuver from the older, slower days of plane racing, had been enough to shake him up and handicap him. Ferguson hadn't won. He hadn't even come close to winning.

And now—because they were sore at Jimmy's refusal to donate any lap money he might win to the fund for Jerry

Walker's widow and because of the story going the rounds about Sonny Dawson—they were going to see to it that Jimmy didn't knock down any prize money.

Jake paused, just long enough to direct an angry sizzle of tobacco juice at a surprised Hal Watts' right shoe. Then he turned and ran frantically toward the stands. He had to delay that race, somehow. He had to get word to the officials before it started. Because he knew how desperately Jimmy wanted to win that race. Jimmy wouldn't take a crowding. So, if someone tried it, someone was going to get killed.

And Jake didn't want anyone to get killed. Not even Art Byer who, when he wasn't being very noble and hot-headed, wasn't a bad guy. And, especially, not Jimmy Cole.

Tony Wood, walking leisurely toward the grandstand, turned to hear and see Jake coming. He ran alongside, asking, "What's up, Jake?"

"They got it rigged," panted Jake. "They're gonna crowd Jimmy. I got to . . ."

Jake ran on, wiping sweat out of his eyes, and trying to shrug off Tony's restraining hand. It was a minute or so before Tony's words filtered through.

"Take it easy! Take it easy! Jake, they're in the air."

He slowed then, halting, his courage plummeting down into his shoes, feeling his breath wheeze and his forty-five-year-old heart pumping erratically. Feeling all the hope seep out of him as bitter, rankling frustration replaced it. He was, indeed, too late. They were airborne.

The race had started!

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CHAPTER III

HOT SHIP



WHEN the official starter checked his watch and said O.K., boys," the groups of waiting pilots broke up. Jimmy Cole, standing alone, climbed into the orange P-51.

He cranked forward and secured the plexiglass cockpit hatch over his head, tightened safety belt and shoulder straps carefully and adjusted his plastic crash helmet.

He was pretty well satisfied with the bright orange Mustang. In the gamble to get money properly to care for Sonny had gone all his savings, all his ideas. It was a quest for power—always more power.

He'd upped her rated horse-power another four hundred with water injection. That meant building tanks into her wings.

Though she already had the tricky characteristic of a hot ship—the tendency,

if left to her own devices, to fly into the ground—he'd ruthlessly clipped two feet off her wings. It made her nose heavy, but built up her speed. Jake had helped him with other changes—magneto timing, nose section, prop reduction gear and valve openings. He'd tried three props before finding one that seemed to absorb all the horsepower his engine gave him. She was good.

And now he'd find out whether she was good enough!

Pasted to her instrument panel were two-inch-long strips of gummed masking tape. Twenty of them—one for each lap of the 15-mile quadrangular course—carefully numbered. It was safer to rip one off each time you rounded the home pylon than to try to carry the laps in your head.

Out front, the starter gave them the white five-minute flag and nine waiting engines whined and sputtered into life. Jimmy's engine shut out their roar and his eyes were busy on the instrument panel, his ears busy with the sound of

He had to delay the race, somehow—if he didn't, someone was going to get killed.



her. She sounded fine. He looked out at her stubby, re-skinned wings, hoping they'd take the 400-mile-an-hour pounding.

A hundred feet to his right, in Number Four spot, was Art Byer's green P-63. Art was staring at him and—encouraged by Skeet Lavelly's casual greeting and Pappy Selfridge's fatherly few words—Jimmy gave him a grin and a nod. Without acknowledging it, Art turned away.

Swallowing the moment of hurt, Jimmy tried to peer far out to the right, but he couldn't see Pappy's A-36. But he knew 52-year-old Pappy would be out there in it, cool as Christmas, an old hand at this business; ready to cut down your superior speed with superior flying; riding your rudder every foot of the way.

To Jimmy's left, in Number Two position, Chuck Ford, a test pilot, waited, his smaller P-39 resting on its tricycle gear. Chuck was cocky. He had a right to be cocky. He had a fast, sponsored ship; a G-suit that would keep his blood where it belonged when the gravity built up in those tight turns around the pylons. And he was good—very good!

The starter gave them the red, one-minute flag and Jimmy shoved his throttle forward until the friction lock, set for full, engaged it. Against the roaring, surging power of the revved-up engine, he held her with his toe brake. Mentally, he clicked off the diminishing seconds.

He saw the starter suddenly go high on his toes (thirty seconds left!) and then, dropping both flags, follow them to the ground. The instant the two flags left the starter's hands, Jimmy released his brake, felt the P-51 spring forward. Terrific torque—as always—tried to pull the ship to the left and he fought it, holding her straight with right trim tab and full right rudder.

He got his gear up fast, located the pylon with its cream and red bunting, ahead and to the left, and saw Al White's blue Corsair in the lead, making the most of his inside track to that pylon. Chuck Ford was just to the left, ahead. Art Byer was close, quite close, to Jimmy's right; hanging on; closing in. Pappy Selfridge, Jimmy saw, had got off to his usual good start.

Jimmy found he was handling the

Mustang too tightly, too tensely. He tried to relax. It did no good. Nothing did any good. You might be in more trouble later, but this was the moment that bothered you.

For the start was a rat race, laden with innumerable deadly and unexpected dangers. You were legging it for that first pylon and the lead. And eight other ships were converging down the inside of an invisible funnel with you, all of their pilots with the same idea, the same worries. Any of them might figure it too closely—and clip you.

This was the moment, too, when your engine was likely to blow up in your face. You were pulling a terrific batch of power. How much, you'd never know since there was no time to check gauges. There was only time to fly the course and try to keep all the rest of them out of your hair.

They were wide and messy on that first pylon and just before it was time for him to start his turn for the second, Jimmy saw Art Byer cutting in on him. Instinctively, he nearly bore left to avoid Art's crowding. Nearly! His whole body stiffened with refusal. For if he moved so much as three feet to the left he'd be crowded to the point where he'd cut the pylon. He started to pull to the right—and saw the nose of a plane there. He didn't know whose plane.

It was time to make the turn and Jimmy went into it with Art Byer, wing tip to wing tip and sickeningly close. And, when Byer cut sharply in front of him, there was nothing to do but pull up to avoid a collision.

And so, in the exact middle of his own turn, Jimmy caught the full, vicious, sudden turbulence of Art's prop wash. He had to fight the P-51 then, to keep her from whipping over on her back.

But he managed the turn without cutting the pylon. He'd lost ground, though. Skeet Lavelly's black King Cobra passed him on his right and he saw Pappy Selfridge pulling up alongside. Almost immediately, he pulled away from Pappy, glancing down to follow the power line between Two and Three pylons and, when he came to the river, saw White and Ford already making their turns, Art Byer and Skeet Lavelly trailing them.



NOW in fifth place, Jimmy settled down to overhauling Skeet Lavelly. They were still bunched when he passed Skeet in the second lap and he began to overtake Art Byer. Art was wide and sloppy on a turn and Jimmy pulled almost alongside him on his inside and they flew along between pylons, dangerously close and—once more—Art Byer cut in, crowding him on a turn, using his scant lead to force him in towards the pylon.

This time he knew it was deliberate. And this time the bitterness welled up in Jimmy and he cursed, angrily, slacking off power, momentarily, to drop behind and go wide of Art on the turn.

Then, quite suddenly, the green plane crowding his began trailing white vapor from its nose section.

"Header tank's exploded!" thought Jimmy, no longer feeling bitterness.

What Art Byer had been trying—deliberately—to do, he now almost did by accident as he jerked his ship up and out, frantically seeking the safety of altitude. He cut so closely in front of Jimmy that Jimmy felt a numb, helpless moment of conviction that their wing tips would lock.

And then, as the brutal blast of prop wash hit his plane for the second time, there was no time for feeling, for seeing. Only time to fight the controls, to prevent—at all odds—the jerking, suddenly unpredictable P-51, from whipping over.

Fighting her through it, he had no chance to see whether Art got the altitude to make it back into the airport—or to open his canopy and bail out.

Rounding Number Three Pylon in the third lap, Jimmy felt the whole of his body relax. He hadn't been passed, this time, and now, at last, they were strung out—those who still were in it. Now it was a straight race, shaking down to his speed comparison against that of the others; his ability to fly the course tight and fast, against theirs. He was in third place. And unless some see-sawing developed with White and Ford, who were ahead, or with Skeet and Pappy, who were just behind, probably, he'd have the turns to himself, now. It was damned nice to have the turns to yourself; to make them tight, not wide.

He did a neat 80-degree around Three pylon and saw his check point up ahead to his right—a bunch of white houses, beyond them a factory with smoke stacks—and, for the first time, checked the instrument panel. The Merlin was roaring evenly; the gauge needles stood where they were supposed to stand, without fluctuating.

Flying at a hundred feet or less above the deck, the pylons—despite cream and red bunting and the red lights atop them directed at the pylon you had just left—were often hard to find. Number Four was the worst of them, but he found it easily enough now.

About a quarter of a mile from it, he began his turn. At 100 feet from Number Four, he aimed the P-51's nose head on at the pylon, letting skid carry him out and around it. Looking down, he could see one of the two pylon judges standing on the outer edge of the pylon's base, looking straight up. They had a telephone down there connected to the judges' stand in the grandstand. Only, Jimmy thought, they wouldn't be telephoning *that* turn. It had been a good turn. Had felt just exactly right. Nice and tight, but no cutting.

He was getting the feel of it now and that helped. The trick was to fly the course as tightly as possible at maximum speed, keeping your height pretty much the same. Too short a turn cost you speed; too wide a turn, distance. Either forced you to adjust for the next pylon, whereas you wanted to fly it the same, keeping one pylon up.

He flew across a wooded section, then over the airport, crowded with 80,000 spectators, toward the home pylon. Rounding the pylon to start the fourth lap he had his first chance to attend to the adhesive strips. He ripped off three of them on the short leg between One and Two, found the greenhouses that were his check point below and went into his turn on Number Two.

He became conscious, now, of the turbulence. Gusts slammed the P-51 around and yanked him against belt and shoulder straps. He didn't mind. The P-51 was behaving. She was running cool and smooth, her oil temperature and manifold pressure O. K., her water in-

jection gauge showing a steady twenty. The re-skinned wings were staying together and he settled down to the routine of 80-degree, greenhouse; 120, power line; 80, houses, factory; 120, trees, airport.

Making his turn in the ninth lap a blue Corsair climbed high and wide and out of it and, in the split second he saw her, he knew it was Al White's first-place ship, the fastest in the race. That left only Chuck Ford, in the yellow Aircobra, ahead of him.

It meant—if he and the P-51 could hang on—\$8000 and, for the fleeting part of a second, he grinned, mumbling, "That will buy a pretty good surgeon."



GRAVITY began to go to work on him as he rounded Two pylon on the tenth lap. He'd remembered, with a start, to switch on his second gas tank. If you let one empty on you and switched in another, she could throw a rod or, backfiring through the carburetor, heave a chunk of engine back into the cockpit at you. So there was just that brief, part second of reaching down to the gas selector between his legs and he was sure he was flying her at the prescribed 200 feet. But, when he straightened up and looked out, he saw that the P-51 had ducked under. And there was the ground, less than house-top height beneath him, rushing by at 400 hundred an hour. He eased back on the stick—scared—and managed a nice, tight turn around Number Three.

And then he felt it. He'd felt it before, but now it was strong! A pulling sensation at his eyes that made everything in front of him a gray blur. He blinked his eyes, fighting off the graying-out that made his check points a blurred uncertainty and the location of Number Four a complete mystery.

The sun was getting low, the day gray with a grayishness that had nothing to do with gravity and he found the pylon. Only, instead of showing cream and red and sharp, it was gray so that, finding it, he still wasn't sure it was the pylon.

Turbulence wrapped itself around the P-51 just then, slamming him from side to side and throwing him up until his

plastic helmet cracked against the canopy. Belt and shoulder straps had been loosened by the roughness of nine laps. It was just as well he got the bouncing around at that moment.

For he had—without realizing it—tightened up, tensed up. Gravity did that to you, rushing your blood from head to stomach, so that you flew badly and thought you were flying it tight. The bouncing relaxed him, the gray fog lifted a little and he took Four pylon deliberately a little wide, building up only a four-or five-G pressure.

But wide turns—with the race only half over—would not keep him in second place. He settled down to fight the tiredness that began to seep into him and the gravity-induced grogginess that kept tensing him up. Rounding the home pylon he ripped off a numbered strip of adhesive. It clung to his finger, refusing to shake loose, and that simple incident built up in him until it became a bitter agony of exasperation. He got it off—and found he was flying down near the ground again.

Four become continually harder to find and when he rounded it he seemed, each time, to fly lower; closer to the tree tops in that wooded belt between Four and the airport.

He was tired, now, every muscle of his body aching with tension; every nerve-end shrieking as turbulence slammed him up and down and from side to side, his belt and straps no longer holding well.

The cockpit had become an oven. The Merlin roared sweetly, but her heat rose to the top of the bubble canopy, enveloping his head. The canopy itself was generating its own heat from the friction of air streaming over it at racing speed and his clothes were wet. He reached down to the calf-high air intakes—and found them working. Straightening, he found he was flying low again.

As he began the seventeenth lap, the needle of the water pressure gauge danced crazily, sank off to zero. Engine heat began to crawl up and he started to lose some power, but none of those behind overhauled him and she roared smoothly without water injection. Looking over the side for a check point, he saw a yellow P-39 with tricycle gear down there in a pasture.

Chuck Ford was out of it! When or where he got out of it, Jimmy didn't know. No one had passed him. He'd passed no one. Whoever was still in it would be crowding him, less than a lap behind. But Chuck Ford was out of it!

He was first, now. If he could hang on, he'd win it—the Thompson! And sixteen thousand dollars. Eighteen, if his speed set a new record for the 300-mile course.

The centrifugal force of the turns kept bearing down on him, increasing the weight of his tired body, the weight of his plane and every part of his plane, from four to eight times, curtaining his vision with misty gray, tightening him up despite himself.

Engine heat and cockpit heat mounted and he was making too many turns, now, wide and sloppy. The rest would be feeling it, too, and, stubbornly, he kept at it. He went into the nineteenth lap easing off a little power, praying for the Merlin to hold smooth for two more laps.

His dizziness seemed worse, now; his vision cleared more slowly on those turns. He had a headache and nausea flickered savagely in his stomach. He'd been wide—far too wide—rounding Number One. Determined to tighten up his turn on Two, he waited too long before pointing the P-51's nose at the hazy pylon.

A strange languor had replaced the tautness of tension now and he seemed to float with incredible gentleness around that pylon.



IT WASN'T until he'd nearly completed the turn that he realized, with a jerk of shock, that he'd looked straight out, at eye-level, to see the side of the pylon; that his altitude had been less than pylon height; that his left wing tip had nearly brushed the cream and red tower.

"I've cut it," he thought confusedly—and then realized that to have cut it at that altitude would have been to fly into it. So he hadn't cut it. Just the same, he'd been down far too low. And the judge, down on the ground, wasn't going to like that.

That would be fine—to be disqualified now. Nausea suddenly smacked the pit of his stomach like a hammer blow.

And this would be a fine time to vomit, too!

He coughed—dry, racking coughs—and knew that something was wrong. Not engine heat nor friction heat nor gravity nor fatigue. Something . . . One second he was lining up Number Three, automatically thinking of his check points.

And the next second, he didn't give a damn. He was tired—very tired—and if he closed his eyes, relaxed, maybe the P-51 would fly herself long enough for a short nap and forgetting that nausea and . . .

His eyes started to close in the middle of that turn. He nearly slept. And, just before he nearly slept, he foggily saw Skeet's black King Cobra overhauling him, preparing to make the turn inside him.

That—that and the fine mechanism of fear deep in the subconscious of every good flier—sounded the alarm that jerked him to wakefulness. He realized that he had cut in front of Skeet, viciously tight on Three Pylon. And that he was flying lower, lower . . .

And then he realized that he hadn't meant to do that to Skeet—that he hadn't meant any of these things he was foggily doing. And he knew, with sharp, piercing sureness, what was making him fly so badly. The knowledge—more terrifying than anything he had ever faced in his twenty-seven years of life—pimpled his sweating flesh.

He knew, now, the deadly, invisible thing that was riding in the stifling cockpit with him. The same thing that—they had decided—had caused a capable pilot like Jerry Walker to fly, unreasoningly, into the ground.

Carbon monoxide! He was getting carbon monoxide into that sweltering cockpit, as Jerry had during the qualifying trials. And it would rob him, shortly, of consciousness and he would fly into the ground and burn. He remembered Jerry's burning plane. He'd seen enough of burning planes.

Swiftly, now, his brain dictated the routine he must follow to live. Ease the throttle back. Pull up and out of the race. Find that red emergency handle under the glare shield on the right-hand side of the cockpit—the handle that would auto-



He wasn't going to clear the tops of those trees this time!

matically loosen and release the entire bubble canopy above his head, admitting the fresh air that would save his life.

But scoot down—be sure to scoot down—because the savage force of that life-giving air at racing speed could also decapitate a man.

He'd made the turn around Three Pylon. Instinctively, automatically, tightly—cutting too close in front of Skeet, though he hadn't meant to. Well, now, he was out of it.

The fingers of his left hand touched the throttle to ease it back.

And then the mental image of that other burning plane was there in the cockpit with him, too. The plane in which Sonny Dawson had nearly burned to death. He couldn't quit now. Not if he had to ride the rest of it with Death sitting on his knees in that monoxide-poisoned cockpit. The air in that cockpit might get better, might get worse. That was the long and slender chance left to him. But he had to take it!

He shook his head, clearing it a little. And, foolishly, tried to take only *shallow* breaths. His fingers came away from the

throttle as he tried desperately to orient himself.

And suddenly, in a spasm of terror and helplessness, he knew he was licked. For the P-51 had ducked under. She was really down there, this time. Riding the deck as he never had before. Ten feet—not more—off the ground.

And—dead ahead—was that stand of trees. The trees whose tops he'd been crowding lately. Somewhere, somehow he must have rounded Four Pylon. Staring at the trees in horror, it wasn't their tops that worried him now. This time he wasn't looking down at green-leaved tree tops. He was looking straight ahead at the eye-level thickness of their lower branches and the sturdy immobility of their trunks.

He growled, once. The animal growl with which man flings defiance at death. He eased the P-51's stick back toward his queasy stomach, holding his breath against the poisoned air in the cockpit. And knew—as he eased the stick back and nausea burbled inside him—that there wouldn't be time. Not at 400 miles an hour; not at this distance!

He wasn't going to clear the tops of those trees this time!

CHAPTER IV

WELCOME BACK



STANDING IN THE field, Jake saw only spectator's fragments of the race. He'd missed the take-off, but saw them round One Pylon with Jimmy in third place.

Between One and Two they went out of sight behind a hangar and were hard to follow until—having rounded Four Pylon—they came roaring toward that stand of trees to the left, pounding down the back stretch of the lap in front of the grandstand.

So Jake didn't see Art Byer crowd Jimmy the first time. But when he saw Jimmy had dropped from third place to fifth, he knew. And bit hard on his tobacco and cursed silently. And when, during the third lap, he saw Art Byer, his green plane trailing vapor, climb sharply to 400 feet, searching for a place to land and finding none, bail out, Jake

breathed more easily. This time, when he saw them approaching the wooded strip, headed for the home pylon, Jimmy had regained third place.

Newsome's P-63 pulled up and out of it in the fifth with engine trouble and when Jimmy came over the trees and into the backstretch he was still a steady third. Jake—his ears turned to the roar of the Merlin—nodded, satisfied: "Runnin' sweet."

He had the rhythm of it now, learning to gauge almost the exact moment when he might look and see them approaching from behind the stand of trees off to the left: Al White first; Chuck Ford, second; then Jimmy, with Skeet Lavelly, Pappy Selfridge, Watkins and Roberts close behind him.

Jake saw Al White's blue Corsair climb up and out of it in the ninth lap and looked at Jimmy's plane and muttered, "Second! He's second!"

The race continued to take its toll of faltering engines. Watkins dropped out in the eleventh and, in the fifteenth, Chuck Ford's leading yellow P-39 climbed high and wide, leveled off, then sought a field. Jake sighed happily, then, wiping sweat off his brow with the back of one hand. The kid had done it! All he had to do now was hold his position. And he'd cop the Thompson—and sixteen grand.

Jimmy seemed a little late coming into sight beyond the trees and when he did appear—low, but over them—and roared past, Jake listened critically. The Merlin sounded as sweet and smooth as ever.

Lavelly, Selfridge and Roberts came stubbornly grinding over the tree tops after him and Jimmy went unusually wide on the home pylon.

"He's tired," thought Jake. "They're all tired."

And, as if to confirm his words, they all went wide around the home pylon. All but Pappy Selfridge.

Jake turned to watch the trees to the left—and to wait. And, when he was sure Jimmy should be in sight approaching those trees—he wasn't. The waiting became an agony—the long minutes dripping, mercilessly, like water upon Jake's uneasy consciousness.

"He'll be along," Jake told himself.

Jimmy came along then. Over the trees.

But *just* over them! Jake had fought back the feeling, the knowledge, that something—he didn't know what—was wrong. Now he knew something wasn't right and, his lips dry, he muttered as though Jimmy might hear him, "Get her nose up, boy! Not so low!"

It wasn't the Merlin, either. She roared strong and sweet-throated. Helplessly, Jake watched Jimmy take the first pylon, going into the nineteenth lap, wider than he'd taken any of them.

"Tighten her up, Jimmy, boy!" he muttered uselessly. "Fly her tight! Tight!"

Something was wrong—and there was nothing to do but wait. Wait to pick Jimmy up approaching those trees for the twentieth and final lap.

"If only those trees weren't there," thought Jake. "If only I could see him sooner."

But they were there and there was nothing to do but wait, in a clammy expectancy of nameless horror.

Again—long seconds after it should have—Jimmy's P-51 had not come into sight. So, he was in some kind of trouble and Jake's eyes searched the sky—to right, to left—hoping he had pulled safely up and out of the race. He hadn't.

Jake stared, bewitched, at those trees, repeating foolishly, "Over them, boy! Over them!"

And he didn't come over them. Those trees were two miles away and it was not until he had long cleared them that Jake could hear Jimmy's engine. Now Jake's mind worked tricks upon him. For he heard what it was impossible to hear: a powerful roar, smooth and deadly in its rushing, twenty-two hundred horsepower surge. The roar of a Merlin—*below and behind those trees!*

He wanted to turn away then. He wanted neither to see nor to hear the distant, more audible crashing noise that would be trees and plane and Jimmy's young body.



AND THEN, in that dark moment of waiting, Jake saw the incredible sight of Jimmy's plane bursting through those tree tops. Not over. Through! Prop-chewed leaves swirled and floated in the air as the P-51 plowed on and Jake thought

he could see—as the plane roared down the stretch—a staved in wing-tip and a deeply dented nacelle with a thick branch still stuck in it. Jimmy even managed a nice turn, going into the twentieth lap.

And, for the last time, Jake waited. And Jimmy came over those trees—respectably high over them—and roared down over the finish line, then immediately shot the P-51 high and sharp into the air. Jake saw the bubble canopy rip off and fall earthward. That puzzled Jake. And as Jimmy leveled off and came in to land, Jake gauged his landing spot and ran out to meet him.

"You did it, kid," he yelled. "You beat 'em all home. But what happened?"

Jimmy's eyes were glazed, his face green.

"I—I was getting monoxide in the cockpit, Jake. Get me out of here, will you? I think I'm going to be..."

Jake couldn't get him out quite soon enough.

It was at that exact moment that Joe Ross, one of the judges at Three Pylon, cursing because something had gone wrong with his direct wire to the judges' stand in the grandstand, finally got his call through.

"Bill," he said, "this is Joe Ross at Three Pylon. Damn phone went dead. I've been trying to get you. Look, this fellow James Cole cut in front of Skeet Lavelly on my pylon. Almost hit Skeet. Most flagrant cutting-in I've ever seen. And he flew the course far beneath the prescribed altitude, dangerously and recklessly low, during the nineteenth lap. Got a hunk of tree in his nacelle, I think. Better not announce a winner yet. I think Cole ought to be disqualified."

That's the year, you may remember, they held up the decision on the race. Held it up for an hour. They had Jimmy Cole before them. And Jake. And Skeet Lavelly. A committee inspected the orange P-51. And Tony Wood had a few words to say. But it was Skeet Lavelly who resolved it. They asked him if he wanted to file a protest.

That was a precedent—and a chance for Skeet to make sixteen thousand instead of eight.

But Skeet—being Skeet—said, "I don't

(Continued on page 130)

A FACT STORY



His mind in a torment, Bill Lemon crawled stealthily from his blanket and picked up his axe.

FATAL GOLD

The Mystery of the Lost Lemon Mine

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The Mystery of the Lost Lemon Mine

By
PHILIP H. GODSELL



ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

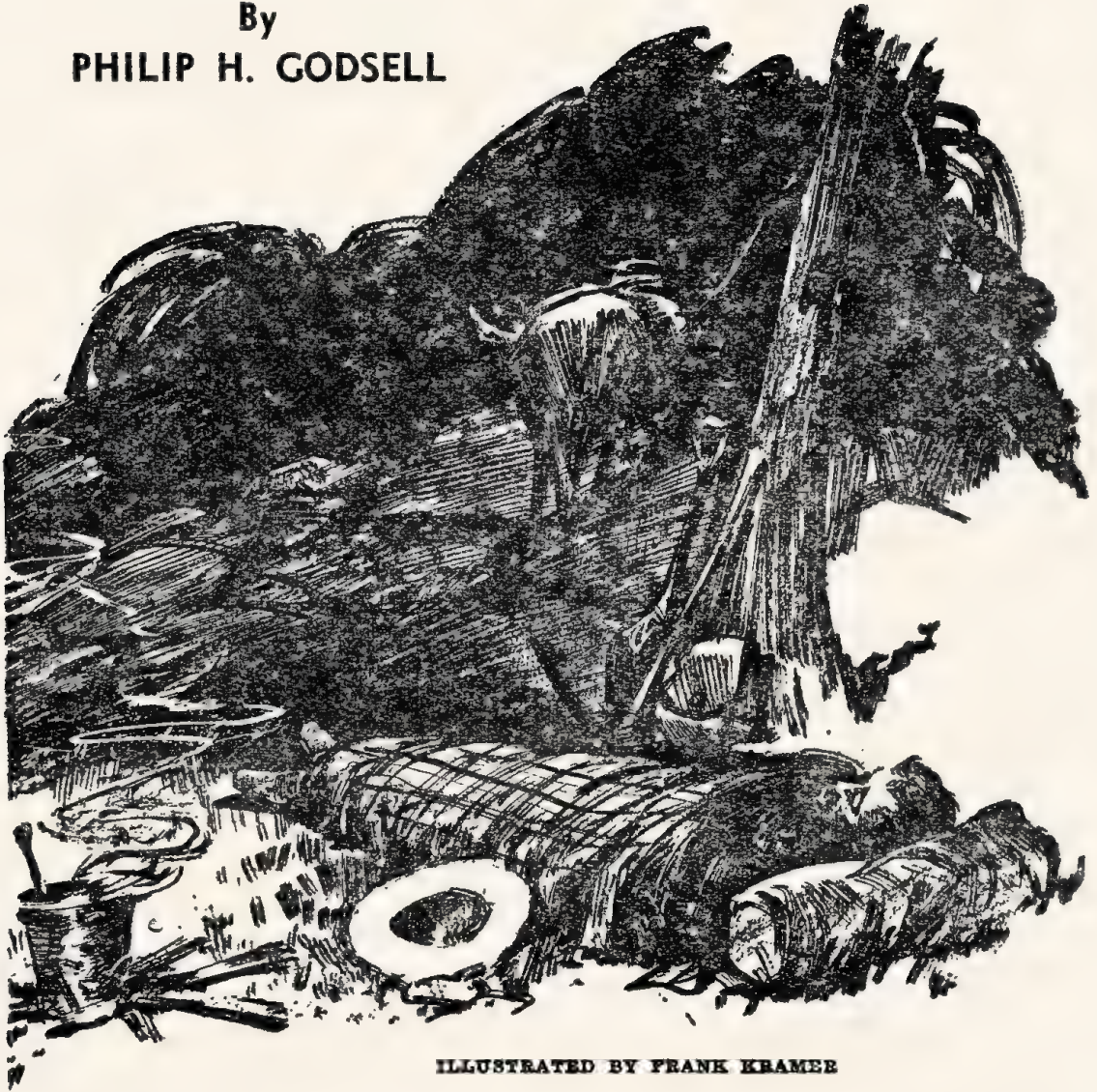
THERE'S a strange fascination in stories of lost mines and lost men. There's the famed McLeod Mine in Dead Man's Valley in the heart of the saw-toothed Nehannie Mountains for which prospectors have searched for forty years, only to have it elude them and leave a trail of bleached, wolf-gnawed skeletons behind. Then there's the lost Lemon Mine somewhere in the foothills of southern Alberta, which men have sought through the years in vain.

On a balmy spring day in the late eighties the main street of the frontier settlement of Tobacco Plains in northern Montana was crowded with sun-tanned, flannel-shirted men, mahogany-faced Indians wrapped to their chins in

blankets, and tartan-clad squaws toting their papooses on their backs, their eyes fixed on the throng of buskskin-coated men milling around on their shaggy pintos and buckskins. With a wave of his trail-battered sombrero Emil La Nouse, half-breed leader, emitted a farewell whoop and drove his silver spurs into the ribs of his cayuse. Then to a barrage of shouts and badinage, the cavalcade of gold-seekers and hunters swept out of town in a cloud of red-gray dust. Headed for the North Saskatchewan river to hunt and investigate rumors of recent gold-strikes there, the party was accompanied by two rugged, sun-tanned "rock-rats"—Blackjack McDonnell and Bill Lemon.

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Blackjack had already earned the

reputation of being the best prospector in the Northwest, having been the original discoverer of the rich Cariboo diggings in the heart of British Columbia. He and his partner, Lemon, had been staked by Lafayette French, old-time Indian trader, Government scout and buffalo hunter of Fort Benton, on the turbulent Missouri

Leaving the Saskatchewan-bound party, the two men decided to head west with Emil La Nouse's well-armed band of half-breeds since they'd afford them protection from any bands of rampaging Blackfeet bucks. Finally the party split again, the two prospectors following an Indian lodge-pole trail up High River towards the purple-shadowed Rockies, while La Nouse headed for the notorious whiskey-fort of Stand-Off.

As they jogged along with their pack-horses, camping at night in deep coulees or on the bald-headed prairie, Blackjack and Lemon panned the creeks and found good sign in the bed of some nameless stream.

"We'll work up this hyar stream till we hit the headwaters." Blackjack turned to his partner. "This color comes from somewhere and I've a hunch we're goin' to make a strike."

Bill nodded in agreement. Following the mountain stream, they discovered rich diggings from grass-roots to bedrock. Sinking two pits, which gave up more gold, they went to bring in their cayuses from the picket line. Suddenly Blackjack emitted a roar like an infuriated buffalo bull. The hoofs of one of the cayuses had turned over the sod, exposing a ledge of rock that seemed simply loaded with gold. Traders who saw samples of this rock at Fort Benton later described it as resembling a body of solid gold with a little rock shot into it.

Smitten by the gold-fever, the two men talked wildly as they made camp that night, assured that their fortunes were already within their grasp. "Tell you what," Blackjack's excited eyes met his partner's over the camp-fire as they fried their flapjacks and bacon, "we'll stake out our claims, high-tail it tomorrow and get 'em registered. Once it gets out we've struck it rich, we're liable to get crowded out if we don't get everything tied up good and reg'lar."

"Like hell we will!" Bill Lemon's face froze in angry disagreement. "Now we've found what we want, we'd be fools if we didn't cash in on it and work the diggin's for all they're worth. Nobody knows where we headed for. We can record 'em later. Me—I'm stayin' right here till I've got a stake."

In the bitter argument that followed, unforgivable insults were flung at each other under the heady wine of the new-found gold. Finally they rolled themselves up in their blankets and the scattered poplars no longer echoed to their bitter quarrel. Soon Blackjack's heavy breathing told that he was sleeping. But Lemon did not sleep. His mind in a torment, he crawled stealthily from his blanket, picked up his axe and brought it down with venomous force on the head of his sleeping partner. Then, overwhelmed with panic as the realization of the enormity of his crime penetrated his befuddled brain, Lemon would have fled but was afraid to venture forth till daylight. Building an enormous fire, he tucked his rifle beneath his arm and strode to and fro like a caged beast.

Little did Lemon think that two pairs of beady black eyes had witnessed the entire tragedy from the cover of the surrounding bush. Old Bearspaw, chief of the Stoney tribe, whose village the prospectors had stopped at to rest, had dispatched two young braves, Calf Child and Medicine Owl, to trail them and they'd seen the men sink holes and discover the fatal gold.

As night wore on, Lemon appeared half-crazed with the thought of his terrible deed while, with grim humor, the young braves added to his distress by whistling, moaning and making other weird and ghostly sounds. With the first exploratory streak of dawn, Lemon mounted his cayuse and high-tailed it southward.

No sooner had he broken camp than the two Stoney braves ransacked the spot, took the two remaining cayuses and set out for the tepees of their tribesmen on the Morley reserve, where they reported all they'd seen to old Bearspaw. Fearful lest other acquisitive palefaces should hear of the gold strike and overrun their game-filled hunting grounds, the old chief swore the coppery braves to everlasting secrecy.



LATE that summer a lone, trail-begrimed horseman with sunken cheeks and glazed eyes rode into Tobacco Plains and made his way to the little white-painted mission on the outskirts of the town. There Bill Lemon confessed his crime to his old friend, Father Le Roux, showed him the gold that he and his partner had panned along the river, and displayed to the eyes of the amazed priest the rich rock that had led to Blackjack's murder. The man seemed almost crazed by the recollection of what had happened and could hardly speak coherently.

Without a moment's delay Father Le Roux rounded up John McDougall, a half-breed mountain man and trapper and dispatched him to the scene of tragedy. Locating the spot McDougall buried the wolf-gnawed remains of Blackjack, reared a mound of stones over the grave to keep off prowling animals, and returned to Tobacco Plains. But he hadn't escaped the vigilant eyes of Bearspaw's scouts. No sooner had he departed than a party of mounted braves swooped down on the old campsite, tore down the cairn of stones, scattered them piece-meal and obliterated the last trace of the whites and their discovery.

All that winter Bill Lemon remained with Father Le Roux on the borderline of insanity. Meanwhile the moccasin telegraph had carried news of the rich gold-strike far afield. As soon as the snow melted and there was forage for horses, a large party of grizzled miners, with Lemon at their head, set out to re-locate the mine. But the fates were not in a propitious mood. Though Lemon scoured the gulches and hillsides; though he searched countryside and canyon for the mound of stones McDougall had reared as a marker over Blackjack's grave, he was thwarted at every turn.

"He lies—he's holding out on us. He wants to keep the diggin's to himself," roared wrathful miners.

"String the——up and see if we can't choke the truth out of him," bellowed Swiftwater Bill, untying his lariat and fashioning a slip-knot.

Faced by the encircling throng of berserk miners, seeing murder in their glistening eyes, the thin cord that

anchored Lemon's brain to a nebulous sanity snapped. Next moment he was babbling in insane delirium. All night his own party stood watch over the raving man and next morning prepared to re-trace their steps to Tobacco Plains, the curses of the angry miners ringing in their ears.

Undiscouraged, Father Le Roux outfitted another party. This time the leader was to be the burly half-breed hunter, John McDougall, who'd buried Blackjack and was certain he could re-locate the grave. McDougall was over at Fort Benton, and was to meet the rest of the party at Crow's Nest Lake.

Leaving Fort Benton, McDougall set out with a couple of pack-ponies to keep the appointment. At Fort Kipp, a notorious whiskey post near the border, he ran into some half-breeds and a band of roistering Rocky Mountain hunters. Toasts were drunk in potent rum. Soon McDougall was hopelessly drunk. A few days later Father Le Roux received word by moccasin telegraph, later confirmed by a half-breed trapper, that the man he'd depended on to guide the party had drunk himself to death!

The next year still another party of horsemen, well equipped with a string of heavily-laden pack-mules and ponies, jogged through a crowd of blue-shirted frontiersmen and cowpunchers who thronged the main street of Tobacco Plains and soon were lost to sight beyond the blue-green horizon. Within a month they were back again, gaunt and cadaverous, their clothing scorched and ragged. They'd been caught in a raging forest-fire beyond Crow's Nest Lake; many of their pack-horses, carrying provisions, had stampeded—losing their lives in the forked flames that roared down upon them, whipped by a savage nor'wester. Only by the skin of their teeth had they escaped being burned to a crisp in the holocaust. From now on the lost Lemon Mine acquired a new name—The Hoodooed Mine.



STILL undefeated, the priest organized another expedition the following summer. Lemon, who seemed to have regained his sanity, climbed into the saddle and

led the party. But proximity to the place of tragic memories again unsettled his addled brain and the men were forced again to turn tail and take him back. From Tobacco Plains Bill went to his brother's ranch in Texas where he lived for many years, having lucid intervals at times, but haunted always by the sinister curse of the hoodooed mine.

Disgusted, the priest gave up the search for the lost mine, only to see it avidly taken up by scores of others. One of these was Jim Nelson, a member of the first Lemon party. But a tireless summer search, with predatory bands of inquisitive Stoneyes hovering ever on their flanks, failed to reveal the secret of the hidden hoard.

Finally the wiry figure of the old buffalo hunter and Indian trader, Lafayette French, swung from his buckskin mount before the Emerson House on the squalid main street of Tobacco Plains. "I'm going to find the secret of that thar gold Lemon and Blackjack found if it takes me the rest o' my born days," he told a bunch of cowpunchers and hunters over numerous shots of red-eye whiskey in the square-fronted Grizzly Bear saloon. To a friend, French showed a faded pen-and-ink sketch-map marked with mountain ranges and serpentine streams. At the head of a three-forked creek was a cross and, against it, the magic legend: *Gold*.

"That thar map," he growled through his beard, "was made by Bill Lemon. I went down an' seen him as his brother's ranch in the Texas Panhandle. And that thar mark," he placed a gnarled finger on the cross, "is whar Blackjack made his strike—the richest thing this side o' the Rockies. That's why I shook the dust of Fort Benton off my moccasins and high-tailed it up here."

True to his words, for the next fifteen years Lafayette French devoted himself unswervingly to his self-imposed task. His first trip was far from auspicious. In the vastness of the hills he was overtaken by some strange malady and dragged himself back to Tobacco Plains, more dead than alive.

Recovering, the old veteran went about his work methodically. He spent months with the survivors of previous expeditions that had searched for the lost mine. One

of them he hired to accompany him with his pack outfit to Crow's Nest Lake in order to identify some of the landmarks in the district traveled by Lemon's first expedition. He kept La. Nourse and his band of half-breed hunters all one winter in order to check up, when spring came, the spot where Lemon and Blackjack had parted with them the year of the murder.

Rounding up Calf Child and a number of his Stoney tribesmen, he fed them the greater part of another winter at Lee's ranch on Pincher Creek. In the spring he drove twenty-five sleek horses and a similar number of fat cattle into the pasture. "Those will be yours—" he gazed into the inscrutable eyes of Calf Child—"the moment you show me the place where Blackjack was buried."

With a guttural "A-ha!" Calf Child tossed his long braids over his shoulder and agreed to guide the delighted trader to the spot. Pack-horses were laden down with supplies, guns, axes and ammunition, and the party set out in high spirits—this time they were going to dig up the gleaming gold that so far had eluded everyone! But the second night out some superstitious terror took possession of the red man. Despite all arguments and persuasion, he refused to move a step farther. Again the expedition was abandoned.

It was some time later when French made another bargain with the Indian. Calf Child and his band were trekking across the prairies towards the tepees of the tribe at Morley when French tackled him. Finally the Indian agreed to camp at George Sage's place—an abandoned ranch on the middle fork of the High River—till French could get George Emerson to join them. Again Calf Child was persuaded to conduct them to the murder spot. That night the Indian died suddenly in convulsions.

Convinced that it was the result of "bad medicine" worked on him through his intention to betray the secret of his tribe, his people placed his body on a cayuse-hauled travois and carried it fearfully back to the encampment. The very night of their return to Morley, Calf Child's son-in-law died in the same mysterious manner—another manifestation, according to superstitious Stoneyes, of the wrath of the *Wahcondah*!

The hoodoo that had haunted French continued to dog his footsteps to the very last. In a fire of mysterious origin that turned the Emerson House into a blazing holocaust, on the day of his return from his last expedition, he suffered terrible burns. On the same evening he'd written a letter to a friend at Fort Benton and posted it at the Bar U Ranch. Evidently he was in a state of great exaltation and excitement. He had at last, he said, located it, and was going to High River in a couple of days to tell him everything and enlist his aid. But when he did arrive there, he was unable to utter a word and died without recovering his speech. If he'd actually succeeded in solving the mystery he'd spent so many years trying to unravel, then his secret died with him.



NUMEROUS attempts have since been made to re-locate the hoodooed mine, one as recently as 1939. There are many who say that nothing will be found on this side of the Rockies, but geologists point to a tract of land between Crow's Nest Lake and Mist Mountains on the headwaters of the Highwood River as a disturbed area where precious metals might be discovered. In the opinion of old "rock-rats" and prospectors, if the Lost Lemon Mine is ever located it will be somewhere in this region.

If one is to believe the numerous stories that have drifted down through the years, the search for the hidden Eldorado had claimed more than Blackjack's life. There's the story of a white man's skeleton found in the gap of the Old Man River—the skeletal fingers still clutching a bag of gold! There's the authenticated story of two men, both badly wounded, stopping overnight at a ranch in the foothills. They carried with them pokes of gold-dust and mineralized quartz and were fleeing from the west as though the devil was at their heels. Refusing to account for their wounds, they rode away for Macleod next morning, but never reached there and were never heard of again. Had they re-discovered the Lost Lemon Mine only to be pursued and killed by jealous and wrathful Stoney Indians?

From time to time old mounds and pits have been found, containing human bones; the remains of log cabins buried deep in hidden gulches; old rusted muzzle-loaders; pack-saddles; cooking outfits; rat-gnawed bedrolls, and other abandoned equipment. Again there's been talk of foul play and the curse of the Lemon Mine. For no mountain man or trapper would abandon his outfit unless he'd met with a mishap or some tragedy had intervened.

But the lost Lemon Mine has yet to be re-located.

Headache on the Iron Range



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THE TEMPER OF



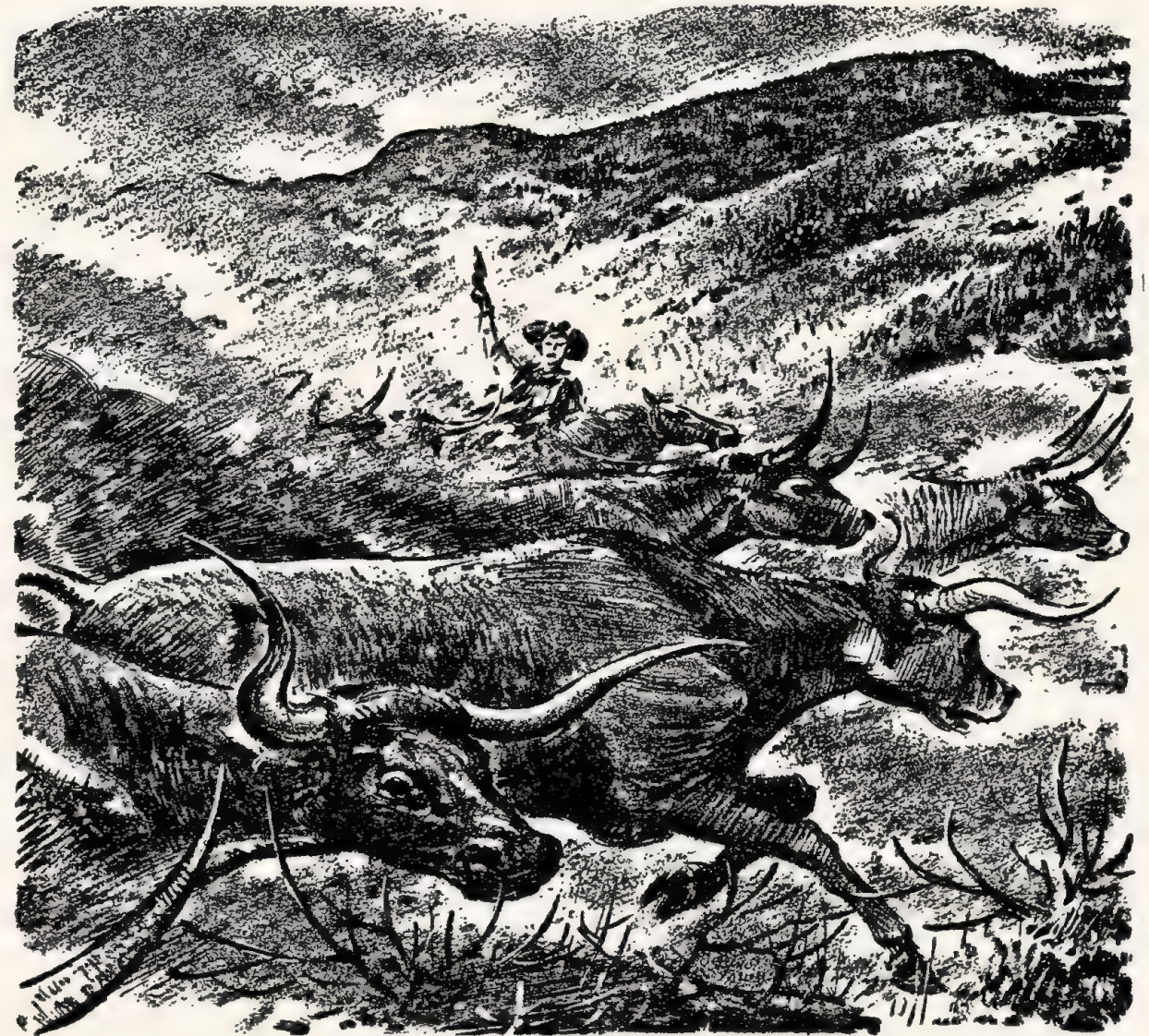
Fired by the fever of battle, the little bay reared to strike with his front feet.

THE TEMPER OF JOHNNY MULDOON

By
CADDO CAMERON



Fired by the fever of battle, the little bay reared to strike with his front feet.



TROUBLE was no stranger to scrappy Johnny Muldoon, but this promised to be serious. The stocky, redheaded cow foreman of the Circle S had recently lost his temper and knocked a man down—the livestock appraiser of a bank that had a plaster on nearly every

hoof and head claimed by Old Louie Schultz, owner of the outfit. The bank official demanded that Johnny be fired forthwith.

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ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLEHOPF

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talking it over this May morning. Johnny waited for the axe to fall. Old Louie stroked his white beard and squinted through the sunlight at cattle feeding out yonder on the prairie.

"I know jest how you feel, boy," he said. "You love them Circle S cows and you hate like hell to see 'em pass into the hands of strangers. Yep, I know. But damn it—Johnny, that cussed temper of your'n run clean away with you again!"

Muldoon kept still. Born with that temper, he had lived with it twenty-nine years. It had out-grown him, too. He stopped at 160 pounds, all in one chunk, but the temper grew into the heavyweight class. Johnny figured that maybe his childhood had something to do with it. Orphaned by Indians at four, he had been taken by a neighbor who thought it cheaper to raise help than to hire it. At ten he ran away. For four years he practically lived off the frontier country—a "wild boy", and it took a kid with plenty of guts and fighting know-how to do it.

Johnny was a two-legged wildcat when, at fourteen, he hit Old Louie for a job. They put him to wrangling the remuda with a northbound trail herd and he had been with the Circle S ever since. He moved up from kid wrangler to top hand on the home range in Southwest Texas, then to trail boss and cow foreman on this North Texas range claimed by the Circle S; and Old Louie often swore that regardless of the fact Johnny Muldoon had a temper like gunpowder, he was the best damned cowman who ever cussed a critter on the morning after.

The Circle S was the only real home and Uncle Louie the only father Johnny could remember. The Circle S iron had burned deep into his tough hide. To get fired now would cut him to the soul, though he'd never openly admit it.

After a short silence, Schultz asked, "Whatever made you bust that bank man so all-fired hard, boy?"

As usual, Muldoon answered straight from the shoulder. "He allowed that the Circle S would never have got its tail in a crack this away if it had been managed like a cattle business ought to be. The cuss declared that you're an old wrinkle-neck, hardly fit to hunt cows with

dogs and pack mules. That's when I busted his teeth in."

The old man brought out his plug of tobacco and looked at it . . . "Too bad." He sank his teeth into the plug and viciously ripped off a chaw. "So now you're fired. The bank man says to fire you and the bank has got me over a bar'l. If I was fo'ty year younger I'd tell the bank to go to hell. I'm mighty sorry, Johnny."

"Don't blame you a particle, Uncle Louie," declared Muldoon. "Now all I gotta do is to find me another job. First thing, though, I'll find that bank man and kick in the balance of his teeth."

"That might be a pious idea—" He stopped abruptly. "But don't you do it, Johnny. I wangled a purty good proposition out of the bank and he might mess it up. He's the kind that would. Here's the situation."

The old cowman went on to enumerate the troubles of the Circle S. Johnny was familiar with most of them—wholesale thefts and bandit raids on the home range in the Border Country. Losses in last year's drought. Falling prices of beef and the money panic. Banks tightening down, demanding more collateral, foreclosing on mortgages.

"But down underneath we're sound as a silver dollar, Johnny," continued Louie Schultz. "There ain't nothin' takes the place of good red meat and folks will always want it. Cows is better'n gold. We've got 'em—good, honest cows, and the range to carry them. They don't know there's a panic on. The she-stuff will go ahead droppin' fine calves and the steers won't quit puttin' on beef."

He paused, looked with pride at the cattle on the prairie. "While you was comin' up with them stockers from the home ranch I contracted three thousand mixed cattle—steers fours and up, and dry cows—cash on delivery to an outfit on the Arkansas River in Colorado. Then the bank come down on me and taken over everything on this range. They're sendin' a crew to put up the herd and drive it. I pulled some wires and got the bank to agree to take the interest I'm owin' 'em from the profit on this herd and give me the balance in cash. Shore hope that herd gets through."

"Why don't they let us drive 'em?" asked Muldoon.

The old man shook his head. "Hard to tell for certain, but I'll gamble that the man you busted is to blame. He's got a cousin that wants to be a trail boss—fella by the name of Buck Condon."

"Buck Condon!"

"Uh-huh. Know him?"

"No, but I've heard a plenty about him—all bad."

Louie Schultz heaved a sigh. "Hate to hear that. If this herd gets through all right we'll be square with the bank on interest and have the cash to carry us for another year, which is all we need. It's *got* to get through!"

"Yeah, it's got to," muttered Johnny Muldoon.



IN THE evening ten days later, Johnny rode up the Middle Concho to overtake the herd. The cattle had been put in the bank's road iron—Lazy O, and the drive would follow the Old Butterfield Trail to Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos, thence northward on the Goodnight-Loving into Colorado. Muldoon had left the Circle S range immediately after his talk with Uncle Louie and hadn't gone near the herd since it was shaped up and lined out on the trail.

Johnny had not been idle, though. Riding far and wide, he had picked up stories about Buck Condon and they had him worried. It was said that Buck ranged mostly with the wild stuff, but his Dad's money had always gotten him out of trouble; that he was a bully and powerful quick on the shoot, and good men swore that his hanging was long overdue.

Johnny lifted his chunky bay, Bumble Foot, from a jiggle to an easy lope and soon ran onto the Lazy O herd around a big bend in the Concho. He halted a short distance away. The cattle had evidently watered out at the river and were now circling loosely onto the bed-ground, a gentle rise of land in the second bottom. A pretty sight to a cowman. The soft bellowing, the click of horns and hoofs, the slap of quirts on leggings and an occasional controlled yell made music in the ears of Johnny Muldoon, and the smell of the herd and its dust was good

in his nostrils. His quick, blue eyes missed nothing. His weathered face beamed with enthusiastic approval of the careful manner in which the crew was handling a herd of three thousand wild longhorns not yet trail broke.

Water them good, he thought, then bed 'em down loose and easy. Buck Condon may be a prime so-and-so, but he is a cowman. Which would wash away many of his sins in Johnny's estimation.

Above the noise of the herd came the pounding of hoofs close behind Muldoon. He turned quickly in the saddle. A large man on a tall gray horse was coming hell-for-leather around the bend. His heavy face was either naturally florid or flushed by liquor and Johnny wondered whether he hadn't tanked up back at Ben Ficklin. The man started to yell at Muldoon, then apparently saw he was a stranger and galloped on.

Before reaching the herd he commenced to bellow orders. Calm horses went to prancing, leg-weary cows with full paunches and logy with water got flighty, riders squeezed down the line of cattle and hurried them onto the bed-ground. In no time at all the peaceful herd was fixed to explode.

So was Johnny Muldoon. Those were Circle S's—*his cows*. He cursed aloud. "Why, that must be Buck Condon and the damned fool is half tight!"

A leggy steer broke through the circle of riders and ran like a pronghorn toward the river. Buck Condon spun his horse, spurred viciously, jerked down his rope and wasted a loop on the fugitive. Bumble Foot fought for his head. Johnny let him go. The stout little bay pounced onto the steer like a cat, ripped off a patch of hair with his teeth, then almost upset the brute with a shoulder blow and quickly turned it back to the herd. Muldoon halted off to one side.

Buck Condon rode over, coiling his rope. Several riders stopped work to watch and listen, some edging their horses nearer. The burly trail boss carried himself as if he owned all that part of Texas and regarded Johnny as a trespasser. He demanded, "Why didn't you bust hell out of that critter?"

Buck's looks and tone were more than enough to start a fight with the fiery red-

head. Johnny clenched his jaws until his teeth hurt. Had to get a job with this outfit. He answered quietly, "I've been taught never to bust a critter in a trail herd. Might lame it and these cows have got a powerful long walk ahead of 'em."

Buck's face was a storm cloud. He thundered, "Are *you* tryin' to tell *me* how to work cattle?"

The Lazy O riders cocked their ears. Notwithstanding the fact that he'd be giving away about fifty pounds, Johnny Muldoon thought how satisfying it would be to drive his fist squarely into Condon's mouth. He didn't take such talk from any man. Then there was the danger of backing down before the hands. They'd think him yellow. But he had to get this job, so he replied calmly, "No, I ain't trying to tell you anything. Fact is, Mister, I'm here to hit you for a riding job."

The Lazy O hands went back to work, talking among themselves.

Johnny Muldoon got the job. Apparently the bank man had not mentioned his name to Condon, or discussed the affair at the Circle S. Riding to where the wagon was camped, Johnny said to himself, *I see dust up the trail. Don't know what's under it, but I sure as hell see dust on the trail ahead.*

What the Lazy O cook told him didn't ease Muldoon's feelings a particle, either. He and Arsenic Jones had been trailmates on the Chisholm and had slept in the same blankets on the Circle S. Confidentially, the tough old cook declared, "Redhead—so he's me, you're a flamin' answer to a sinner's prayers. This outfit was goin' to rack and ruin befo' you rode up."

"How come?"

"We got a man that needs a good old-fashioned killin'," replied Arsenic. "Everybody knows it, but nobody dast do anything about it. I'd a put strychnine in his vittles if I figured it'd kill the cuss, but I know it won't."

"Who's that?"

"Buck Condon."

"What ails him?"

"Everything. He won't like you worth a damn."

"Why not?"

"Too much fight and not enough run-from-trouble in you."

Johnny grinned. "Are the crew his boys?"

"Hell, no! He rounded 'em in from here and yander. They hate his liver."

Muldoon nodded. "I didn't come here looking for a fight. Some of the hands will tell you that I've already sidled off from trouble with Condon."

Old Arsenic Jones squinted skeptically at him. "Cain't hardly believe it."

"Fact, though," declared Johnny. "Like I told you, Uncle Louie fired me and I'm needing a job powerful bad. Got some debts to pester me."



CONDON soon came in to supper with eight of the sixteen riders. Arsenic Jones introduced Johnny around, emphasizing the fact that he had been a trail boss for Louie Schultz. Buck showed unpleasant surprise, for Muldoon merely told him that he had ridden for Schultz. The hands were cool and standoffish toward the new man. And that hurt. He thought, *they've already burnt me with the yellow brand.*

With a green herd the trail boss was making double guards—half the crew on duty until midnight, the balance until the cattle were grazed off the bed-ground in the morning. Condon placed Johnny in the second guard.

While they were eating on the ground near the wagon, Buck said, "You fork your own horse tonight, Muldoon. I'll cut you a string in the mornin'."

This order might easily cause trouble in any crew, for where an outfit mounted its men they were not required to work their private horses. A Lazy O rider had quit at Ben Ficklin yesterday and Johnny would customarily take over his mount of five or six ponies, so Buck was obviously tormenting the new man out of pure cussedness.

Johnny looked quickly at Condon, hesitated a moment while fighting a battle with himself, then remarked quietly, "Perfectly all right with me, boss, only that little old Bumble Foot of mine has put some country behind him today and he's needing his rest. If they happened to run tonight he'd be plumb petered out in no

time. The raymoother is corralled. Why not cut me a night horse now?"

Buck Condon flushed. "Because I told you I'd get you another horse in the mornin'! You've got ears, ain't you?"

Johnny Muldoon went suddenly hot all over. He felt every eye upon him, taking his measure, waiting, giving him another chance to show his spunk if he had any spunk. More than one man stopped with cup or food in midair. Old Arsenic froze with an oven lid suspended at the end of his pothook.

Muldoon fought a pitched battle with his temper . . . *The herd has got to get through!* . . . That thought decided the



"I told you I'd get you another horse in the mornin'!" Buck Condon said. "You've got ears, ain't you?"

issue. He shrugged, and said calmly, "It's your herd, Condon. If you say so I'll stand guard on a tired horse, but I won't ride him to death if they run."

Old Arsenic dropped the lid with a clatter. The others fell to eating again. Their eyes pointedly avoided Johnny. Bitterly, he read their collective thoughts—*Yellow!* It made no difference that none of them had called the bully's hand. They judged him without regard to their own conduct and branded him a coward. A new experience for redheaded Johnny Muldoon.

Buck Condon got ponderously to his feet. Instead of carrying his eating tools to the cook's round pan as demanded by range custom, he left them for someone else to pick up. Adjusting his gunbelt significantly, he growled, "Tired horse or not—just you let me catch one of my men throwin' off when they're a-runnin' and he'll wish the stampede had rolled over him."

Condon glared from man to man and back to Muldoon, then lumbered away bellowing at the kid wrangler to rope out and stake his night horse for him. He left hostile silence behind him.

Old Arsenic looked long and hard at Johnny, and muttered dolefully, "I see blood on the moon."

Muldoon said nothing. The situation was loaded with gunpowder and he could say the wrong thing without half trying. Believing him to be yellow the crew would have no particular sympathy for him and wouldn't resent Buck's treatment of him, except as a matter of principle. He was a hand. They were hands. Moreover, Condon had probably been carrying on this way from the start and anything could happen now. Apparently the Lazy O riders were waiting to hear from a sober, middle-aged man—Tom Henderson, who seemed to be something of a leader.

Frowning into his coffee cup, Henderson said dejectedly, "Boys, I been workin' stock here and yander for better'n thirty year and this will be the first time I ever walked off'n a job befo' it was finished. But—what I mean, I'm a sore-footin' it back to Ben Ficklin in the mornin' and I'll catch me a stage for home."

The younger hands quickly chorused their approval of the idea. One hot-head added, "And I'll betcha the boys on herd now will ramble right along with us."

"Yeah," another piped up. "Buck Condon thinks he's so damned good—let's us see what he can do a drivin' three thousand head all by hisself."

Though he really couldn't blame these men, this was the very thing Johnny Muldoon had feared. If they abandoned the herd here no telling what would happen to it. He had to do something, and quick.

Looking across at Henderson, he declared, "I know just how you fellas feel about quitting a job in the middle of it. I know that when you take a cow from her home range where she can get along pretty well by herself and drive her into strange country where she needs a human to ride herd on her, you can't help feeling sorta responsible for her and you hate to go off and leave the critter. Any real cowman is bound to feel thataway."

Johnny paused. He hoped this appeal to the loyalty of a cowhand to his stock would have an effect. He thought it did, and continued, "Your herd ain't to blame for the trail boss being what he is. That's the hell of it, boys. Fact is, I'm kinda to blame for bringing this ruckus to a head. First off, Condon don't like the cut of my jib. He talks some and I let him get away with it because I'm needin' this job powerful bad. So he'll spend the next few days a chousing me. Maybe he'll go easy on the balance of you. Why don't you trail along just to see what happens? A man can *always* quit."

Old Arsenic moaned, "Like I said—I see blood on the moon."

Johnny grinned at him, trying to ease the tension. "Be still, you damned old gunsmoke prophet!"

No one else grinned. Henderson's eyes narrowed as he pondered matters. The others waited, faces tight. Presently, he said with a touch of scorn, "Reckon I'll trail along for a spell. I'm curious to see just how much a full-grown man will take."

Muldoon's temper blazed again. He flushed, but said nothing.

Tom Henderson and the first guard

went on duty. No more was said about quitting.

Johnny felt like an outcast. He spread his meager bedding of slicker and blanket some distance from the other hands. Anger drove sleep away. He lay on the hard ground, locked in a struggle with his temper and slept little before the second guard was called to go on herd.



THE first guard reported that the cattle were flighty, that many steers had refused to bed down—walking and hooking others who had, and that cows were dropping calves. Condon put Johnny in charge of the second guard, ostensibly because of his experience. Muldoon was convinced, though, that Buck thought the cattle would certainly run before morning and wanted him to get the blame for it, otherwise the trail boss himself would've remained all night with the spooky herd.

Johnny frankly confided his suspicions to the eight riders of his guard. Though cool toward him, they agreed with him. Here was work to test the mettle and knowledge of a cowman and they watched him critically. Muldoon grimly swore to himself that this mistreated herd wouldn't be allowed to run on his watch. His manner changed. He was a trail boss again. He issued orders in a way that wouldn't offend, yet left no room for disobedience—orders that showed both cow and man savvy.

"Circle 'em slow and watch your horse's footing, no matter how good he is. No matches. If you have to sneeze, swallow it or sneeze backward. If a mosquito bites, don't slap it." And he went on to mention other ways in which a man could make a sudden noise without thinking, reminding them of things they already knew about guarding a hair-trigger herd.

"Keep a sharp eye on Old Brindle, Droop-horn, Line Back," and he named several more of the most uneasy cattle. "When they come to the fringe and lift their heads and freeze their ears like they're dreaming of someplace else, move in a little closer and show 'em a man on a horse. And don't forget to make sweet music, boys. Your singing may

stampede a man, but a fool cow ain't got enough sense to run from it and it lets her know you're coming."

That was the longest guard Johnny Muldoon had ever made. But the cattle didn't run.

When the herd had been put to graze off the bed-ground in the morning and the second guard was going down to the wagon to eat, Johnny told his riders, "You're cowmen to the bone, boys, and I owe you a plenty for a mighty fine job of work."

They hadn't gone far before Buck Condon came loping back. He was in a vile mood this morning. "Muldoon!" he bel-lowed. "There's six live calves on the bed-ground. Go and shoot 'em!"

Every cowman knew that most hands considered this the dirtiest job on the cattle trails. Few men liked to kill the soft-eyed and trusting little fellas, most men hated it and many would refuse pointblank. But, unless the outfit carried a calf wagon or there happened to be settlers along the route to whom the calves could be given, it had to be done. When bossing a trail herd Johnny had never asked one of his men to do the slaughtering. He always gritted his teeth and did it himself.

Muldoon swung his horse around to face Buck before he knew what he was doing. The others halted in their tracks. Again Johnny realized that he was on trial before a jury of his trailmates. His left hand clenched on his saddlehorn. His right hung near his holster. For an instant hell's fire blazed in his light blue eyes . . . *The herd has got to get through!* . . . He said hoarsely, "All right, boss."

Condon grinned, turned away. Johnny headed for the bed-ground. The second guard rode on to the wagon, talking in tight voices. Muldoon caught the words, "... yaller as a mud cat's belly!"

Late in the evening of the second day after the calf-killing incident the cattle were on the bed-ground and the last guard was eating supper. Buck Condon was there.

In the course of the meal, Arsenic Jones casually inquired, "Redhead, I recollect that you've made two drives over this trail, but I clean forget how you taken the herd across the seventy-five

miles of dry country that we'll hit tomorrow. Tell us about it, won't you?"

Although the question obviously rubbed Buck Condon the wrong way, Johnny was glad the cook had asked it. Condon had never been over this trail and Muldoon hated to think of what might happen to the herd on the long, dry drive ahead.

"Yes, Arsenic," answered Johnny, "I pointed one herd of Schultz cattle and bossed another over this cussed trail, and what I mean, boys, we're in for three days of hell."

He went on to describe in detail how the cattle were managed from here to the next usable water at Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos. He told of mistakes that were made and the terrible losses resulting. In conclusion, he said, "The herd I bossed was plenty trail broke before we hit this dry drive. This one ain't and will be harder to handle. I don't noways envy you your job, Condon. Count on me for any help I can give you."

Buck Condon had listened in sullen silence. His big face showed pure hatred for the man who knew more than he did about driving cattle. "I don't need none of your advice," he growled. "Just you do what I tell you and we'll put 'em through a sight better'n you ever did."

Again Johnny Muldoon's temper flared. His fingers tightened on the handle of his tincup, bent it. He drank to partly hide his face. That infernal temper didn't know when it was licked, but he had to keep on fighting it. This was the most dangerous part of the drive and the herd *had* to get through. He emptied his cup, went to the coffee pot for a refill. He hesitated there, waiting and wishing for the time-honored cow camp joke from one of his trailmates, "Man on the pot!" which would force him to fill all other empty cups. It didn't come. He went and sat down again, a man apart from his fellows.

After the herd had been thrown onto the trail in the morning, Condon rode down to the wagon. He carried himself with grave importance. The second guard was eating rapidly. "Hurry up, you men," Buck told them. "I want everybody in the saddle. I'll drive to the last water. Get there about noon. I'll hold on water until the cool of the even-

in', then I'll hit the trail and drive steady night and day all the way to the Pecos. No rest for critters, horses or men."

He stopped, looked sternly at everyone. Johnny inwardly sighed with relief. Buck was using as his own idea the fairly successful plan Muldoon had described last night. Maybe the herd *would* get through.

They threw off and held on the headwaters of the Middle Concho during the heat of the day. Johnny imagined that the cattle somehow sensed what lay ahead of them, for they drank and drank until their hides were fit to burst at the seams, grazed a little and drank some more. The same was true of the remuda, though Bumble Foot was perhaps the only horse that knew this trail. Meanwhile, Arsenic Jones filled everything that would hold water and the crew took the road with full canteens.

With Henderson and Muldoon on right and left point respectively—swing, flank and drag riders spaced behind them, the herd lined out and pushed onward through the night. The cattle were fresh and walked well for a while. Johnny was convinced, however, that Condon drove too hard, since there was a marked difference in the stamina of the steers and the she-cattle heavy with calf, also the cows who had recently dropped calves. Twice during the night Muldoon suggested holding the leaders back and each time Buck told him to mind his own damned business. Johnny's spirits sank. At this pace the herd *wouldn't* get through.

Condon was riding near by when the first faint color showed in the east. Knowing that he'd draw another insult, Johnny nevertheless said, "Even in this dry country there's a little moisture in the grass at daybreak. If I was in your place I'd slow down and graze 'em along easy until the sun dries it out. Do the critters some good. By this time tomorrow they'll be too thirsty to feed."

"But you *ain't* in my place," snapped Buck. "I say drive 'em and you'll do it, or pocket your wages and get to hell away from my herd!"

Muscles momentarily knotted on Muldoon's jaws. He bit back the things his temper drove him to say. Instead, he declared quietly, "You're the boss. Better put me in the drag. You'll need your

most experienced men back there to keep up the corners and try to cut your losses."

Condon glanced in quick surprise at him. Only the best hands in a crew were permitted on point—the least dusty job and the place of honor. Green men and poor hands rode in the drag and ate the dust of the herd.

Buck jerked his thumb toward the rear. "I been figurin' that's where you belong and I was fixin' to put you there. Send Billy West from the swing. Tell the others to move up one notch. You take Jake Holm's place and send him to the left flank. From here to the Pecos, Muldoon, I'm a holdin' you responsible for the drags."

Johnny told no one that he had asked for the tail-riding job. Buck would swear that he had set him back. Let the crew think so. To hell with 'em! The strain was gnawing on Johnny Muldoon and his temper was taking advantage of it: this temper that didn't know when it was licked.

Day came too soon. The herd toiled through seemingly endless Centralia Draw where the hoofs of cattle now churned old dust on a trace made long ago by Captain Marcy's army wagons, California gold seekers and Overland Stage Coaches. Air hung dead in the draw and its sides trapped the dust. The sun sent its savage heat into the place to suck the last drop of moisture from men and beasts rapidly going dry, and into the inferno went the heat generated by the herd itself. Men stifled in the dust and hungered for a breath of moving air. At long last the herd snaked out, onto the open plains. Men and beasts felt eagerly for the breeze. It came. *It was hot!*

"Drive 'em! We'll lose 'em if we don't get 'em to water. Drive the hell out of 'em!"

Such were Condon's orders as he drifted up and down the line of cattle and as time wore on the man became more and more frantic in his demands for speed. Fortunately, many of the crew were slow to obey, for they were cowmen and realized that he didn't have cow sense. He couldn't look at a cow, judge her ability to travel and estimate how long she would live without water, then balance time against distance and set the proper pace.

But, under Buck's prodding, the pointers were forced to shove the leaders along. The swing cattle often trotted to catch up. Weaker cattle in the flank could scarcely trot. The drags couldn't and Johnny wouldn't let them try. By late in the evening the herd had lost shape—stretched from one-half mile to more than a mile in length. Condon came raging back.

He jerked his horse to a halt near where Johnny and his two helpers were struggling with some cows who were determined to turn back toward the last bed-ground, where they had dropped calves.

"Muldoon!" bellowed Condon. "You're holding up my drive! I sent you back here to do a job. Why in hell don't you do it?"

Johnny and his men threw the cows into the herd. He rode over to Buck, the others at his horse's heels. His throat was tight. He swallowed hard, and said quietly, "We've got hospital stuff back here, but so far we ain't lost a head. Just you leave us be, Condon, and we'll move 'em fast enough to put 'em through to water without killing the critters."

"You'll do what I tell you to do. Drive 'em!"

Muldoon was glad that his bandanna now covered his face to the eyes. He drew a long breath, and calmly said, "We'll do our level best, boss."

Buck Condon snorted in disgust, whirled his horse and spurred savagely away.

Johnny Muldoon was ashamed to look at the other drag riders. Never in his life had he felt so low down.



CAME night and a day and another night, and now the sun was stoking its fires just below the eastern horizon.

Though the herd still lived and staggered onward, this day would bring water or death to many. Men and beasts had gone dry. Old Arsenic had hoarded a little water for coffee, but canteens had long been dry. Many a man shared his last swallow with his horse by wetting a bandanna to wipe alkali dust from its mouth and nostrils, though his own lips were cracked and bleeding and dust and blood



Tom Henderson looked Muldoon up and down. "I'm still wonderin' how much a growed-up man can take."

had caked in the stubble on his jaw. Men carried pebbles in their mouths to encourage the flow of saliva and cursed the mirage that looked so much like cold, wet water.

They rubbed tobacco into their eyes to drive sleep away. After three nights and two days in the saddle in the midst of eternal dust and heat and suffering, eyes were shot with blood and drawn deep into their sockets. Tempers were worn thin and burned raw. Death lurked in the holsters of normally peaceable men and a careless word was a dangerous thing. But doggedly they nursed the dying herd as it staggered onward.

Arsenic Jones had gone ahead and camped the wagon near the trail. The remuda was corralled in ropes there. As the herd lurched past near sunup men dropped out a few at a time to wolf a little food, gulp a cup of coffee and change horses. Johnny Muldoon got off there. Having done the work of two men, he was more haggard than most and the strain of fighting his temper had left its mark.

Bumble Foot came to the rope and whinnied at sight of him. Johnny went quickly over there. The pony brushed his shoulder with a hot and dry muzzle, looking at its master and friend as much as to say, "I'm plumb dry, pardner. How's about a little water?"

Muldoon touched the star in Bummy's forehead, and muttered aloud, "Mighty sorry, Old Hoss, but it won't be long. Water before sundown."

Johnny looked over the company horses in his string. They were in bad shape, having been in the drag where heat was

most intense, dust thickest and work heaviest. He pulled Bummy's forelock, and drawled, "You're nominated for to-day, fella. But you'll get half my coffee." Among other things, he had taught his pet to drink it.

Muldoon turned at the jingle of spurs. Tom Henderson and Condon were approaching. The big trail boss glanced over the remuda, and exploded, "Hell! We're practically afoot! But that bay of your'n ain't in bad shape, Muldoon. I need the best horse we've got. I'll ride him today."

Johnny Muldoon's heart leaped into his throat. He coughed, stalling for time to fight down the temper that didn't know when it was licked. His voice came low and level, "I started him, Condon, and I'm the only man who ever rode him. He'd fight you until he dropped dead in his tracks. I've trained him that way. Don't try to ride this little horse."

Condon looked hard into Muldoon's sunken eyes. He may have caught a glimpse of the menace lurking behind them. At any rate he shrugged, and declared, "If I didn't need every man and horse I've got, I'd ride him or kill him. Hurry and get back to your drags, Muldoon. And see that you drive 'em!"

Johnny breathed a little easier. Aware that he was inviting more trouble, he suggested, "Course it ain't none of my business, but why don't you take the leaders and swing cattle and let 'em walk for the Pecos. I'll bring up the flanks and drags at a gait they can stand."

"Like hell I'll split my herd!" blustered Condon. "You're soft! You're a pettin' and pamperin' the drags. Walk 'em, or leave 'em for the wolves!"

Muldoon had expected this. He took it, got a strangle hold on his temper, and asked for more. "I know this infernal trail, boss. Not too far ahead there's some alkali ponds. A cow drinks the stuff and she's dead inside of ten minutes. Breeze is from the south. If it holds for another two hours, you'd better quarter off south from the trail and drive to windward of that alkali water. Let the lead steers get the scent of it and nothing can keep 'em away from it. You'll lose cattle—plenty cattle."

Buck Condon snorted. "I'll point this

herd as I damned well please. You keep up the drags and make certain that you do it!" He lumbered away.

Tom Henderson hung back. He looked Muldoon up and down, and drawled scornfully, "I'm still wonderin' how much a growed-up man can take."

Johnny's blood ran hot. His fist clenched. Then he grinned crookedly. "Some day, Tom, you may find out."



UP AND down the ragged line of cattle riders spread the news that Muldoon had asked Condon to split the herd, also warned him of alkali water ahead. Johnny caught mutterings, though no one asked him about it. When passing with the wagon Arsenic Jones told him that the men were talking, that they'd take his word as a cowman with savvy, but they thought he was yellow and the old cook couldn't even guess where they'd back him in a showdown with Buck. That was the question tormenting Muldoon while he and Bumble Foot struggled with sick and dying cows in the drag.

Suffering of the stock intensified the suffering of thirsty, exhausted and trail-worn men. No matter how wild a domestic animal may be it looks to the human for succor when danger is upon it, and although he may do his damndest to hide his emotions the real cowman feels deeply his obligation to help the critter. He'll endure misery and even risk his life to save a Ten-Dollar cow belonging to someone else.

Steers that had but once felt the restraining hand of man and long since forgotten it, dangerous beasts that would gore man or horse, now moved close to the nearest rider and lifted their heads and showed him their swollen and protruding tongues, and bawled to him for water. He might curse the brutes aloud, but the pangs of sympathy cut deep inside of him.

She-cattle heavy with calf and those who had calved on the trail were the most piteous objects. A tall red cow staggered to a halt in the dust of the drags near Johnny Muldoon. Deep hollows marked her flanks and her ribs pushed up against her hide. Her tongue was swollen and lolled from her mouth and had dragged

the alkali dust when weakness weighed down her head as she struggled onward. Her legs were propped wide apart and she weaved on them. Her eyeballs were fixed deep in their sockets, listless, *dry*! She had used precious water from her tissues to make milk for the calf born and slaughtered on the bed-ground and now, weakened by the ordeal of giving birth and enduring the torture of a tight and feverish bag, she could go no farther. She had fulfilled her destiny by bearing her owner a calf and it would cost her life.

The tall red cow somehow managed to turn and head back toward where she had left her baby. Johnny Muldoon had shot the calf. He wouldn't leave its mother to the wolves. He shot her, too.

Reloading his six-shooter, he looked down at the dead cow. His sunken eyes blazed. *Mighty sorry, Old Lady*, he thought. *It's all Condon's fault for pushing you too hard—damn him! He deserved that bullet more'n you.*

Cattle water daily in summer, some drinking as much as fifteen gallons. Having had no water in almost three days and nights, the herd seemed to sense the proximity of death. So did the men. The hearts of riders bled for the herd. All differences between the higher and lower orders of creation ceased to exist, so that men and cattle became equal partners in adversity.

And the faltering herd staggered blindly onward.

At length Johnny Muldoon rode clear of the dust to study landmarks. Soon he time to point the herd to windward of the poisonous alkali ponds. His chest rose and fell in a deep breath. His jaw set. Mentally, he tightened his belt.

He went to Frank Wilson, one of his tail riders. "Take charge back here, Frank. Hold 'em to this gait and they'll make it to the Pecos and you won't lose many. I'm going to the point."

Young Wilson, a conscientious boy, was now more than half dead in the saddle. He straightened his gaunt body with a visible effort. "All right, boss. What you say about cows goes with me. And if you need any help up yander, just holler."

That brought a lump to Johnny's throat.

"D'you really mean it, boy?"

"I mean it," was the simple response. "Ain't I seen tears in your eyes when you come back from killin' calves on the bed-ground? Yaller, hell! It takes guts to do somethin' that grabs a holt of you thataway."

Muldoon rode toward the point, pausing to speak to each of the nigh-side flank and swing riders. They approved his ideas for handling the herd, but no one offered assistance should he need it in handling Buck Condon. To the last swing man, Johnny said, "Chuck, we're due to lose cattle if Condon won't take the herd to windward of the alkali ahead. He has already said he won't, but I'm going to try him again. If I signal or you see the leaders make a break, I hope you and your off-side pardner over there will split the herd and hold 'em back or swing 'em south."

Charley Jones nodded curtly. "I've taken a plenty to get this herd over the trail. I've seen alkali cows die. I don't want to see that again."

"Much obliged, Chuck. You're a cow-man."

Tom Henderson was at left point. When Johnny got there Buck Condon was returning from a scout ahead.

"What're you doin' up here?" gruffly demanded the trail boss. "Git back yander and chouse them drags along. They're more'n a mile behind."

Muldoon saw red again, took his time about answering and said quietly, "When your leaders top out on the rise up there they may be too near blind to see the alkali water, but they'll smell it and all hell won't hold 'em. Last time over trail I dropped my herd into the little sag just ahead of us, then swung south and taken it around those ponds. Worked all right. Makes it a shade farther, but we hit the Pecos by the middle of the evening. Boss, I sure think you'd better do that."

"Damned if I will!" roared Condon. "We've got to get 'em on water. I won't waste time goin' around nothin'. Git back where you belong and *drive them drags!*"

Johnny Muldoon's heart seemed to catch and hang dead still for a moment—*The herd has got to go through*—Buck Condon was killing the herd. Buck Con-

don ought to be killed. But a deliberate killing was a hard thing for Johnny Muldoon to undertake. He reckoned he'd wait and see.

"Sorry, boss," he said calmly, "but I'll be riding up here until we get to the top of the rise. You may need help."

The big man growled an oath and rode on.

Johnny felt Tom Henderson's eyes upon him. He didn't look that way—at the moment, he couldn't.

Presently the lanky rider swung stirrup-to-stirrup, and muttered, "I'm still waitin' to see how much a Texas man can take."

Johnny Muldoon looked at him then. "You're a cowman, Tom. If I bust a leg or something, see if *you* can take enough to carry this herd on through—will you?"

The tall cowhand fixed him with a keen eye. "Looky here, Johnny Muldoon. Don't you go and bust no legs."



BREASTING the slope about twenty of the lead cattle—all big steers and the strongest in the herd—set a pace that the swing cattle couldn't maintain. Unnoticed by Condon, Johnny turned and waved a trail driver's signal with his hat. Again his heart stumbled. Then Charley Jones and his partner forged into the gap and

swung a new point of cattle southward down the sag!

Presently, Condon glanced back and saw what had been done. He whirled his horse and sank home his spurs. Muldoon reined Bumble Foot squarely across his path. Buck sat his black horse down.

"What the hell!" he bellowed. "Get out of my way or I'll—!"

"Hold on a minute, boss," Muldoon cut in. Somehow he managed to speak mildly. "I told Charley to do that. Wait and see if the leaders break for the alkali. If they do, you can tell Chuck that you ordered me to signal him. Wait—won't you, Condon?"

For an instant death hung over them. Then, as if to himself, Buck Condon muttered, "Gotta get 'em on water. Can't spare a man."

He rode back up the slope. Johnny followed closely, mopping sweat from his face.

At the crest of the rise the lead steers halted briefly to breathe. Ahead and off to the left lurked the deadly alkali ponds like frosted mirrors in white frames. A scum resembling a skim of ice covered the water and the alkali soil surrounding it was bare of vegetation, destitute of life. Bleaching in the sun were scattered the bones of animals that had come to quench their thirst, then died there. Naked skulls and empty rib cages posted Nature's stark



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and gruesome warning, *DRINK AND DIE*.

Johnny Muldoon almost held his breath, watching the steers. Suddenly, Old Brindle lifted his sunk-eyed head. His hairy ears flipped forward. His dry and dust-caked nostrils tested the breeze. He moaned—a sound from deep in the caverns of his big body and like no other sound, for it gave utterance to misery, fear and dementia. Other steers moaned. The bunch moved. They moved ponderously at first, gathering what little strength they had for a final desperate effort. Old Brindle broke into a lumbering trot. He quartered off toward the ponds. Others followed. A moment later—a thundering lope!

Muldoon, Condon, Henderson and Billy West—the off-side pointer, threw themselves and their horses upon the insane steers. They yelled and cursed and whipped the brutes over the snouts with quirts and doubles of ropes. Cow horses bit, kicked and struck with forefeet. They leaped squarely into the path of the crazed beasts, then scrambled frantically away to escape their needle-pointed horns. Six-shooters exploded in the faces of the steers singeing hair, but they wouldn't turn, stop or even dodge.

Muldoon drove a bullet through one of Old Brindle's horns near the quick. Though the shock staggered the brute, with the smell of water in his nostrils he lumbered irresistibly toward it. Bumble Foot picked the brindle as leader of the rebellion and attacked with the savagery of a panther. Johnny gave him his head. Suddenly, the little bay reared to strike with his front feet. Fired by the fever of battle, Bumble Foot had ventured too near the enemy.

In a twinkling the giant steer whipped his head around and stabbed with a mighty horn, lifted, ripped away. Meanwhile, Johnny Muldoon had fired at the instant

he saw the danger. The scream of the mortally wounded horse split through the roar of his six-shooter!

Old Brindle grunted, plunged head-foremost, buried the bloody horn in the ground and broke it off. Little Bumble Foot came down on all four feet. Johnny had already left the saddle. A tremor shook the pony. His lips drew back from his teeth. He groaned. His legs crumpled slowly, reluctantly. He sank to the ground. Johnny stared aghast at the wound—God-amighty! The horse would have to be shot! He sat down and talked soothingly to Old Bummy.

In a little while Tom Henderson loped back and dismounted there. After a quick glance at the pony, he said grimly, "Leave him here with me, Johnny. You take my horse. Condon has gone down the draw to the herd."

Muldoon brushed the star in the pony's forehead. "So 'long, Bummy. See you in The Happy Huntin' Ground."

He got up and put out his hand. "Much obliged, Tom."

Riding into the sag, Johnny heard a shot behind him. He didn't look back.



THE temper that didn't know when it was licked had at last surrendered. A frigid calm took hold of Johnny Muldoon as he rode toward men grouped near the point of the herd. He had made a decision, coldly calculated and not influenced by anger. Condon was unfit to handle the men and cattle. Out there at the alkali water big beef steers were lying down to die. If Condon had his way wolves and buzzards would soon be picking the bones of good cows on the back trail. There were other dangerous drives ahead. The herd had to get through. Buck Condon had to go.

There were only two men now in place

(Continued on page 128)

Russian Roulette

By DON STANFORD



WE WERE jetsam, most of us, cast upon the Mexican village by the receding turbulent tides of the War; but there were two exceptions. Three, possibly; but the old Chinese might have been anything, he might have been a Manchu or an educated clerk. He was boss of the operation, which was flying wetbacks—smuggling aliens into the Arizona desert—and as long as he paid off he didn't have to talk to any of us, and he didn't.

About the other two, though, there was never any doubt. They were well-born, both of them, the Englishman and the German; they were anachronisms there and perhaps they would have been the same anywhere in the world today, perhaps that is why they were there in the first place.

Buchalter, the German, looked for all the world like something right out of the "Student Prince," maybe the Prince himself. He had blond hair clipped very short and his eyes were bright blue in his ruddy scrubbed-looking face, and he held himself very stiffly always. He dressed in *Luftwaffe* uniforms, all beautifully tailored and always perfectly creased and immaculate, and he even carried a little stick, even in the heat of the Mexican summer.

Clyde, the Englishman, was also blond

and blue-eyed, and right there the resemblance ended, except for the indefinable something in each of them that set them apart from the rest of us, the thing you can't put a finger on or describe in any way, but that you can't miss either. Breeding. Clyde's hair was dull and lustreless, and he wore it a little too long, and his blue eyes had a grayish flatness, and his skin wasn't ruddy like Buchalter's but clear and colorless and transparent. He had a long nose and his voice was high, and he dressed carelessly in those ridiculous shorts the English wear in tropical climates, the ones that reach to the knee. Some part of the indescribable resemblance showed through, though, in the way Clyde dressed; in the silly-looking shorts and the ribbed woolen stockings rolled just below his knees he had the same correct elegance that Buchalter had in his perfect uniforms.

They hated each other with a cold, implacable and courteous hatred, and an incident could not have been postponed as long as it was if they had not both been constrained by a common shame, if each had not realized that the other was just as much out of place here breaking international laws as himself; and the corollary, the inescapable reminder that he himself should not be here. It held

them in check, and at the same time it fanned the loathing they felt for one another.

They seldom spoke in the operations shack, which wasn't a shack at all but an elaborate hacienda old Soong, the Chinese, had acquired somehow. When they met Buchalter would incline slightly, stiffly from the hips in a jerky little bow, and Clyde would nod coldly; and if they sat at the same table in the bar—it was small, and sometimes crowded—they sat and drank in a chilly silence. And old Soong watched them from under his hooded lids, sitting impassive in his rumpled white pongee suit, alone at his small table by the bar.

When the trouble came, it wasn't over anything so obvious as a woman, it wasn't over anything as tangible as the things that used to cause flare-ups among the rest of us. And the warnings weren't as obvious, either, the whole thing was as subtle and as profound as the difference between them and the likeness that intensified the difference. And yet old Soong caught it all, followed every bit of it, and that is why it seems sometimes that the old Chinese might have been a third exception to the general rule of our mongrel breeding.



WHEN Buchalter came into the room that night the place was crowded, and even Clyde hadn't been able to find a place to sit by himself, he was at the large table in the center of the room, surrounded by a couple of Americans, a Pole, a Swede, and a fellow who claimed to be French but might have been almost anything else. And the only vacant chair in the place was at that large table, directly across from Clyde.

Buchalter stood in the doorway a moment, his head high, and flicked a contemptuous glance around the room. Then, with the faintest hesitation, he marched stiffly to the one vacant chair and sat down, acknowledging no one's presence. Clyde wasn't speaking to anyone either, of course, and the two sat there stiffly and tried not to look at one another while the talk at the table eddied around them.

Then the table conversation, which had been noisy and boisterous, died away

gradually into an uneasy silence, and it was increasingly impossible not to notice that the Englishman and the German were staring coldly and unwinkingly at each other. The Pole shoved his chair back abruptly and muttered something and got up and left the room, and old Soong picked up his glass of hot wine and moved over from his solitary table to take the place the Pole had vacated. He didn't say anything, he just sat there, his seamed yellow face impassive, and waited.

Clyde's gaze shifted from the German's face to his immaculate *Luftwaffe* uniform, and although his face was blank and he said nothing Buchalter shifted in his chair presently and said stiffly, "My brother died over London, wearing the uniform of the *Luftwaffe*."

The simple sentence broke the silence in the room, and then the silence closed in around it again and the sentence seemed to be repeated, to be echoed in the silence. Buchalter's eyes were on Clyde's blank face, and presently Clyde raised his eyes from the uniform to meet the German's gaze and said with no emotion, "My mother died in London, beneath the *Luftwaffe*."

A flicker of sympathy crossed Buchalter's ruddy face, and he started to speak and then saw the expression on Clyde's face, a cold contempt, a bitter hatred. The German stiffened visibly and said coldly, "It is to be regretted that some must suffer, but when one's end is so eminently desirable one must employ the means at hand, secure in the knowledge that the means will be justified—"

"And the end?" the Englishman interrupted, and the challenge in his voice was unmistakable, "the end that could so easily justify wholesale and indiscriminate slaughter, pillage and rape and treachery—?"

"A world of beauty!" Buchalter said loudly, his ruddy face deepening in color, his bright blue eyes blazing, "a world of beauty and cleanliness and fitness, with the ugliness and the filth and the unfit removed; with plenty for the fit to share, and none but the fit to share it. Can you not see it, you dull English, can you not see the desirability of destroying that which is ugly before it drains life from the beautiful?"

The Englishman waited, his gaze fixed on the German's face, and his voice was so low as to be barely audible when he answered, "My mother was an extremely ugly woman."

The silence had hardly closed in on that sentence, the thing that was in the Englishman's face and growing in the German's had barely showed itself to the rest of us, when old Soong spoke, and they both turned to him involuntarily, startled to realize that they were not alone in the room.

"An Englishman gentleman," the old Chinese purred, "and a German gentleman. Ideologically different, but gentlemen both; and gentlemen, here, should be allies. On the other hand, there is the Code of Honor—might a Chinese gentleman—pardon!—propose a Russian gentleman's method to settle your differences in a way that will leave my little organization one sound pilot of the two?"

He laid a huge Colt .45 on the table, and opened the cylinder and inserted one cartridge, then closed the cylinder and spun it, and laid the gun back on the table. Oh, it was impossibly melodramatic, it was preposterous; but remember that the entire situation was preposterous, and that it was melodrama we lived, outside the law and therefore beyond it.



WE KNEW the rules of Russian Roulette, so-called, and we watched, and the strangest most melodramatic thing of all is that no one doubted for a moment that the game would be played out. Elsewhere, among other men, perhaps the bluff would have chilled; but not these two. They stared at each other in silence, and then the German reached for the gun and set the muzzle to his temple and squeezed the trigger.

Click.

Clyde picked it up deliberately, set it to his temple.

Click.

It was Buchalter's turn, and then it was Clyde's again, and both times the gun's hammer clicked on an empty chamber. Now it was the German's turn, and there were but two chambers left, and the cartridge the old Chinese had inserted must be in one of them. Buchalter had one

chance in two, and he knew it, and yet his face was still impassive, and his hand, as he reached for the gun, neither shook nor hesitated.

Click.

Buchalter's face was no longer stolid as he laid the gun back on the table with only the sixth, the last, the loaded chamber still unfired. No sign of relief showed on his face, he had not been afraid of death, but only triumph as he watched the Englishman.

And then Clyde, expressionless and unhurried, picked up the gun and set it once again to his temple, and suddenly Buchalter cried, "*Nein!*" and grabbed at the gun.

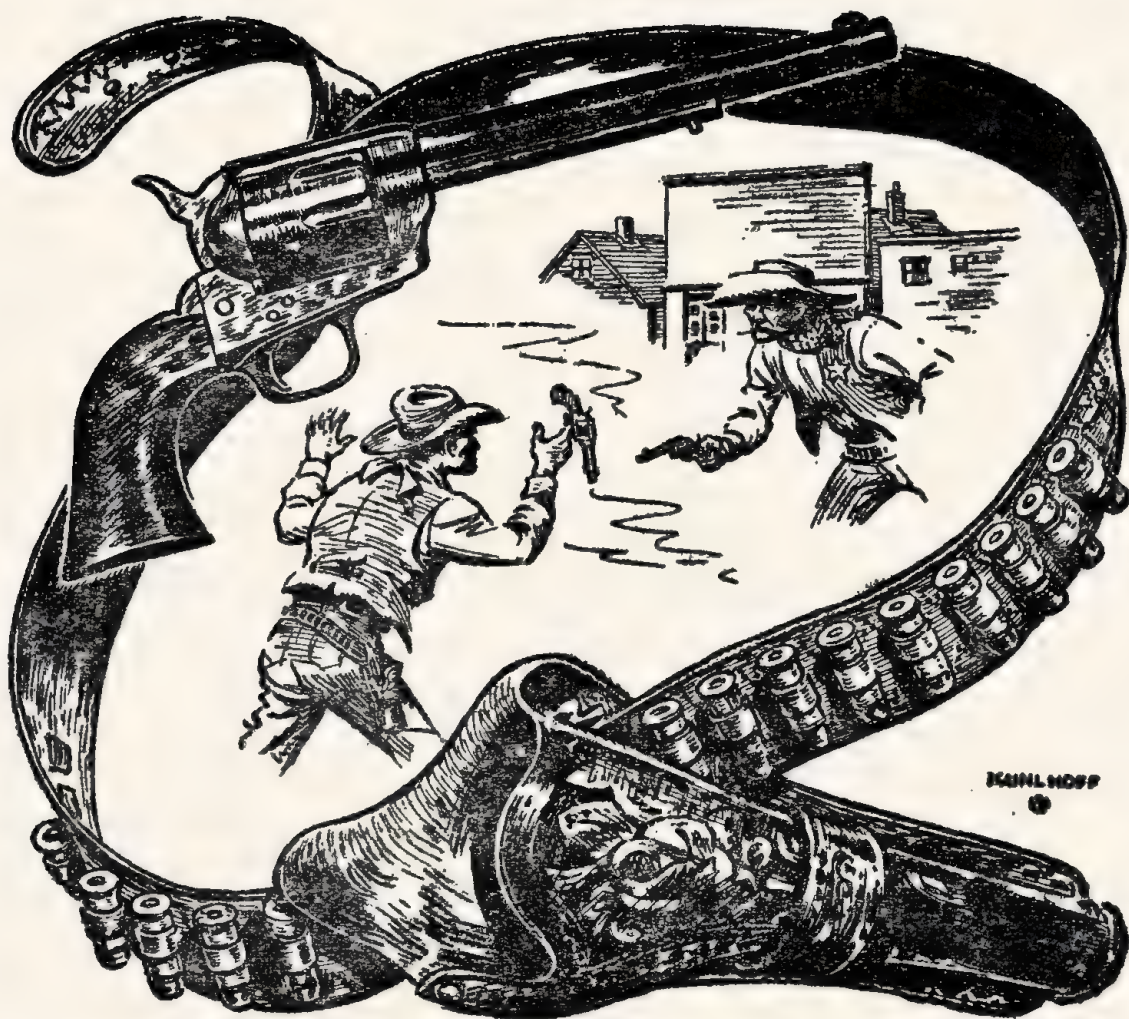
But Clyde's chair went over with a crash, and the Englishman backed quickly away from the table. He stood alone in the center of the room, erect and proud and boyish-barekneed in his silly English shorts, and like an English gentleman he set the gun to his head.

"To die so well!" the German whispered, and it was like a prayer, but the horror on his face was not unmixed with regret. And then the Englishman squeezed the trigger, and the gun clicked harmlessly, and old Soong stepped up with lithe grace and took it away and said, soft and feline and wise and very Chinese, "No gentleman would have used the dummy cartridge, of course; only a Chinese businessman unwilling to sacrifice either of two able associates—"

The German and the Englishman were staring at each other openly now, and there was a growing respect in their eyes that washed out the enmity there, and old Soong's voice had a sudden lash in it.

"Men of proven honor," he said bitterly, "men of different countries and varied ideals, discuss your differences like gentlemen, and let your honor and your courage and the breeding that has been granted you bind you together. You wish to avenge yourselves upon me for the shabby trick I have played on you? Then go, discuss the means of your revenge—"

Clyde was looking down his long nose at Buchalter, and then Buchalter's ruddy cheeks split in a wide grin, and Clyde answered it, and they went out of the room together, with the old Chinaman watching them, impassive as ever.



WESTERN WEAPONS

1: THE SHORT GUN

A FACT STORY By W. H. GRIFFEY

AT ALBUQUERQUE we entered the first shop to display a sign of *GUNSMITH* on its front. A wiry half-pint old gentleman leaned across the pine plank counter to survey us bleakly.

"Can you fix this firing pin?" we inquired. "It's too sharp; hangs in the shell."

He took the nickel-plated .38 in one claw and bent his eagle beak over it for a long moment.

"Cheap gun," he grumbled. "Made outa pot metal. 'Tain't worth fixin'."

"It's a war souvenir," we explained. "It probably has more sentimental value than it's worth."

DECORATION BY PETER KUHLOFF

We removed the stocks and showed him the tiny black hand marked on the inside of one, and the name of Palermo scratched on the inside of the other, while we explained about the Mafia—or Black Hand Society—of Sicily and our ten months' tour of duty in the capital of that island during its capture and occupation. A gleam of interest shone in his hooded eyes. We were rewarded by a thoughtful stroking of the swooping white mustaches that had fascinated us from the first.

"Take a little filin'," he conceded at last. "But these little break-down guns'll heat up and jam their lockin' logs if you fire them much. Takes a swing-out cylinder or the old loadin' gate model for real gun work."

"You sure know about guns," we hinted carefully.

We had driven six hundred miles to talk to him and our informer had cautioned us that the slightest wrong tone of a word would clam him up. Some of the best had failed to interview the old gunhawk.

"There be guns," he admitted. "And men as knows about 'em. Then, there be imitations of guns and men as can't tell 'em from the real thing."

"Wanted to get a Luger in Germany," we offered. "Never could get a hand on one, though."

"Luger ain't no gun," he scoffed. "Just a mechanical contraption to fire cartridges. Like a hopper spittin' out seeds."

"Yes," we agreed. "It does look like something lost out of the rear end of a tractor."

He craned his head to drill us with a penetrating gaze. We withstood an inspection that seared us to the fringes of our blackened soul; apparently passed, for he nodded after a moment.

From under the counter he produced a huge revolver and spun it on the board between us.

"That's a gun!" he announced proudly.

"The Patent Arms M'g. Co. Paterson, N. J. Colt's Patent," we read from the barrel. "That's a real old one!"

"One of Sam Colt's first models," our new-found friend proclaimed.

"You could sell this to a museum for lots of money," we marveled. "But it means more to you as a keepsake. As a relic of the olden times, doesn't it?"



HIS eyes shone as they probed our understanding. He jerked his head in agreement. "Lots of men was workin' on the revolver idea but Colt beat 'em to it. It took a sixteen-year old boy, whittlin' on the deck of a sailin' ship roundin' the Horn, to see that it only needs a cylinder to hold the charges and some sure way to make each chamber line up with the barrel for firin' to have a repeatin' gun."

"That was in 1830, wasn't it?" we prompted.

"Yup. And he started makin' guns in Paterson, New Jersey, about 1836. First named his patented firearm the Texas Pistol. It came into general use and was a popular arm along the Western frontier. A purely simple sidearm with a caliber of .31-inch and a concealed trigger, which was thrown out by cockin'; had no guard and no lever attachment for loadin'."

"Only .31 caliber?" we questioned.

"That's right. Folks was mightily scared of that new-fangled idea at first. Thought it would blow up in their hand. Didn't believe the bullet could move from its chamber down the barrel so easy. Colt had to bring his gun out in .28 and .31 calibers for a few years. Finally, with more confidence built up he got his .34 and .40 calibers on the market. They had a great demand during the Mexican War, along about 1846-47 and '48, down in Texas and Mexico. Men was payin' one hundred dollars in gold for even an old beat up second-hand one!"

"A lot of money in those days," we observed.

"A good gun was more important then," he reminded us. "Meant the difference between livin' and bein' left layin' a lot of times. Then, too, you got your money's worth in a new gun. It was some complicated. You got a hardwood case, fitted to hold the gun and a four-inch metal powder flask, and a box of caps. Included was a brass mold for one round and one conical bullet; a nipple wrench and screwdriver, also a two-blade screwdriver and detailed directions for loadin' and cleanin' a label pasted on the inside of the cover."

"That does sound complicated!"

"Loadin' and cleanin' was a tedious job. It was a handy weapon though, the

old cap-and-ball pistol; its hammer, when at full-cock, formed the rear sight for aimin' and it could be carried safely, when loaded, by lettin' the hammer down on one of the pins between each nipple, on the end of the cylinder."

"Colt had a roaring business by then?" we suggested.

"No. He suffered some set-backs and came near re-locatin' over in London. Lots of those older guns give that as his address. A Government contract kept him here. Colt's was the second breechloader arm ever tested by the U. S. Ordnance Department. That was in February 1836. There was some military use of his firearm in the Seminole War of 1837 and in the Texas Revolution, but general acceptance was slow and his company failed.

"He was conductin' a telegraph business when a Texas Ranger, Captain Walker, hunted him up with a contract for 1000 revolving pistols. Sam Walker had his own ideas about how he wanted those guns made. He'd used the Texas Arm and he wanted the same short gun only bigger and heavier, with a lever and rammer attached and a trigger guard. The Rangers had enough confidence in the weapon to order it in a .44 caliber. That put Colt back in the business and helped him to establish the world's largest privately-owned arsenal, at Hartford, Connecticut."

"Didn't he call that the Walker Pistol?"

"He did. In honor of the man who suggested the improvements. After the Mexican War, came the Gold Rush period and then ten years of settlin' the wild West. The pistol business boomed; dozens of makes came on the market, but Colt held its popular lead. During the Civil War it was in great demand. The Confederates set up factories at Lancaster, Texas and at Columbia, Texas, as well as at Greensboro, Georgia and at Atlanta, to manufacture revolvers patterned after Colt models.

"The old Colonel died in '62 and never saw the later improvements that made his invention the best hand gun ever produced. However, he had established the points that made it famous; it remained a simple, rugged firearm. Anybody could fix it. Didn't need any expert gunsmith trainin'. And anybody could shoot it. Drop it in the mud and wash it out, lose

it in the sand and shake it clear; the Colt always fired and hit what you aimed at. Could be swung by the barrel to hammer with too. Many a wagon tire has been knocked back on with a Colt gun-butt."

"What were those latter improvements?" we queried.

"They came along about 1873 in the most famous of all six-guns. That was the Colt Single-Action Army—some called it the *Peacemaker* and some named it *Hog-leg*, because it looked like a shoat ham—and it had all the best features. It kept the plow handle stock of the old cap-and-ball pistol so a lady's hand would fit it as well as the brawniest roustabout's. There was a choice of barrels in 4¾, 5½ and 7½-inch lengths. And on special order, you could even get it with a 3 or 4-inch barrel. The weight was two and a quarter pounds, about right for wearin' in an open holster. The closely-fitted cylinder set higher than the line of the clenched fist made it easy to handle for shootin' without sightin', and its perfect balance brought out some amazin' draw and shoot artists in those frontier days."

"That must have been an ideal weapon," we prodded the old-timer.



"WELL," he continued thoughtfully, "that was the gun that brought law and order to a wild and woolly West. They tried a model with a semi-round butt, called the *Parrot-bill*, but folks liked the plow-handle grip better. They chambered this revolver in .44 caliber to match the rifle and carbine made by Winchester, which became *the* Western long gun, so a man could have companion arms without mixin' his ammunition. The main thing about a Colt was that it had knockin' power. A bullet from it could knock down any animal on the North American continent. It could knock a man flat on his back; that was often more important than killin' him."

"Guess some of those guns were pretty fancy," we suggested.

"Favorite weapons," he nodded. "Some decorated with silver or gold mountings, staghorn, pearl, or ivory grips and engraved work on barrel and cylinder. General Sheridan received a wonderful pair as a gift after the Civil War; solid silver

handles covered with spread eagles carved out and scenes of his most famous battles. You can see 'em in the Smithsonian at Washington. But the plain old walnut wood handles were most common. They were seldom notched to tally up killings, even by the wildest of the long-haired gentry. That was a Kentucky feud custom."

"What about those frontier gunmen?"

"The Colt gun made 'em famous," he declared. "It made death-magicians out of men who were marshals at one time or another of Abilene, Dodge City, Fort Hays, and Deadwood. In the hands of such men as Wild Bill Hickok, Bat Masterson, and Clay Tallant the six-gun brought law and order to those wide-open, hell-roarin' towns of the old West. Done its best job when Sherrif Pat Garret used it to kill off that cold blooded, murderer. Billy the Kid. Those gunmen had trigger-nerves. The more noted they became the more they had to be cat-eyed when they walked out. Any fool kid might try to down them to build up his own rep."

"They all used the .45 caliber?"

"It was popular but there was a gambler's gun; .41 caliber and short range that carried a blunt, heavy bullet. Then there was the *stingy* gun; the little der-ringer, or bull-dogged pistol, that carried one shot—sometimes two with one barrel above the other."

"Just how did they handle those guns so swiftly?" We were getting around now to the reason we had hunted him up for a chat.

"They usually filed down the upper surface of the dot-catch to produce a hair-trigger," he explained. "The big spur-hammer was cocked by simply hookin' the whole thumb over it and closin' the hand tight. Recoil from the first shot threw the barrel up and the thumb was hooked over the hammer again so the gun would cock itself by its own weight when it was leveled for the next shot. That's where 'throwin down' originated as gun talk."

"Yes, but how did they get it out of the holster so quick?"

"Practice. Pick one method and stick with it. *Hip-draw* was considered by most experts to be the fastest. The gun was worn low on the hip slanted forward

with the butt turned to the rear. It was unlimbered with a fast circlin' movement that started from the shoulder. Straight-enin' of the wrist lifted the gun clear of its holster. When fired as the muzzle tipped clear of leather, it was called a *hip-shot*. Took a lot of self-confidence to make that shot!

"Some men shot through the end of the holster without drawin'. That holster was open-toed and swung on a rivet. First started as the best way to shoot rattlesnakes you come up on sudden-like.

"The *cross-draw* was made with a gun carried at or near the hip, but hanging butt forward. Since it started down along the Mexican Line a lot of people called it the *Border-Draw*. Might as well call it the Telegraph Draw since you had to reach your whole arm across your body to reach the gun. That was the secret of Wild Bill Hickok's success. He used a little psychology. Wore two guns, butts forward, high on his hips. Most men he faced expected him to make a double cross-armed draw which would take a little time. But Bill fooled 'em. He just turned the backs of his hands inward and flipped both guns out without movin' his arms. Took less than half the time.

"There were tricks of the trade. Some of those killers packed a *sleeper* gun under one armpit and made a shoulder draw while their opponent was watching the gun hangin' from one hip.

"The *belly* gun, worn unsheathed in the waistband of the trousers under a frock coat, was brought into use by means of a cross-draw."

"How did they *fan* a gun?"

"Fannin' was a show trick," he scoffed. "Grasp the gun tight in one hand and bring the palm of the other against the hammer in fast strokes. Sometimes the trigger was held back, tied to the rear of the guard with thread, and the hammer fell as soon as pressure was removed from its spur. There was a little runt of a fellow around here in the old days who filed off the trigger and guard entirely and carried his gun in the leg of his boot.

"Then there was *slip-shootin'*. That was speedy because you just thumbed back the hammer and let it fall to fire the shot. No aimin' could be done; you just threw a shot at somebody.

"You could spin the gun forward on the trigger finger, cockin' and releasin' the hammer as it came up under the web of the thumb, in what was called the *single-roll*. Reverse that motion and they called it the *road-agent's spin*."

"A lot of outlaws, when arrested and ordered to turn over their gun, shot their way out with the *pin-wheel* trick. Kept their finger out of the trigger guard and started to hand over the gun. Instead, they threw the butt down and the muzzle up with a jerk of the wrist. The gun flipped in the air so that it revolved and the butt dropped naturally into the palm of the hand for a quick shot."



"VERY few men can hit a barn door shootin' with their left hand. The idea of wearin' two guns was mainly to balance the weight on the hips and to save reloadin' time. Desperate two-gunmen used the *Border-shift* when backed into a corner. Empty the right hand gun, drop it, and toss the left one from one hand to the other to catch, cock and fire it without seeming to pause."

"A lot of attention was given to the gun-harness?" we suggested.

"It got to be complicated," he agreed. "Some men wore two belts crossed around their waist with a gun on each hip. Regular gunmen had belt and holsters cut from one piece of leather with thongs hanging down to tie around each leg. The holsters were sewn up the back edge and the thongs held them down when the gun was drawn."

"Then the *buscadero belt* was invented, or thought up. It was made from four to six inches wide with a slotted flap on each hip extending two inches below the belt. Holsters were fitted into the slots to hold the guns low down when the belt was worn above the hips. Then they didn't ride up when guns were drawn and the tie-down thongs were unnecessary. To keep guns in place a flat steel spring was fastened inside each holster so it would press against the barrel. Individual loops, sometimes a double row of them, carried cartridges on the belt. Straps holding the small square buckle were sewn on extra to make the fit more comfortable and sure as the end of the buckle strap was passed back under the tongue strap

through a loop on the inside of the belt body itself."

"Sounds kind of like a corset!" we ventured.

"Yep. Too clumsy and heavy for the cowboy to bother with as he was not in the business of killin'. About all he needed a gun for was to make noise with, to turn cattle in a stampede, and he looped a holster onto a cartridge belt around his waist and let it go at that."

"There must have been some rare old gun battles with all that talent prowling around," we hinted.

"The tough lookin' man was not always the most dangerous," the old-timer recalled. "There might be a quiet fellow in the corner that he kept clear of for good reasons. One night three well-known badmen stormed into the Elkhorn Saloon and run everybody out. All but one man; that little runt I was tellin' you about. They turned on him and he reached down in his boot. They was drawin' their guns when he fanned six shots into them. They spraddled against the bar with two slugs apiece in their briskets. Neatest bit of shootin' I ever seen but the little fellow took one shot in his hip that half crippled him for life. Never climbed into another saddle or hit the trail again; spent his days cooped up in town. Sometimes I think he might have done better to have got up and walked out with the rest of the crowd."

"He was a game little rooster!" we exclaimed.

"Little roosters have to be game," he scoffed, but his eyes lit up brightly and he walked out to the car with us. "Guess that little gun will work now, but I wouldn't trust it in a tight spot."

"Just a souvenir," we assured him. "Never mean to use it."

There was no excuse to linger as we had pumped him dry and there was nothing else we could think of to ask. A customer turned into the gun shop and the old man hobbled in after him.

We couldn't help but notice the way he walked and a curious bulge in the right leg of his high-heeled boots.

Editor's Note:—This is the first of three articles on Western Weapons by Mr. Griffey. The second—The Long Gun—will appear in April Adventure.



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DEATH'S BLACK SHADOW

By

HAROLD CRUICKSHANK

NAKA, the she-otter, chirped softly to her two small cubs as she nosed them from her. Their little bellies were well stuffed, but Naka's was lean, gaunt. . . The younglings exacted a heavy toll of her.

Cocking her head, she listened with great patience for the start of their snores. Instinctively one of the most ruthless of killers Naka was, too, one of the most devoted of all wilderness mothers.

Her range, along the chain of north creeks and lakes, was fraught with many dangers, to herself and her kindred.

Naka was well developed, at her full maturity with full consciousness of her responsibilities—capable and ready to give battle in defense of her young, even against heavy odds.

She now whirled and darted to the open. All her movements were swift—at play, in the hunt. She displayed a speed and energy that marked her and her kind as the most agile of all creatures. The only exception was when she snaked along, stalking underwater prey; then she glided like a dark shadow of death, whose movement was scarcely discernible. . . .

The first spring full moon flooded the nearby creek where, at the riffles, white water danced over gravel and rocks to the accompaniment of its own music.

*Naka was almost lifted
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ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL PIERCE





Naka raised a foreleg as she sniffed sharply for the tang of running fish. A low snarl escaped her. For some unaccountable reason there was no spawning run this season.

Now she picked up the scent of her mate. Old Chug snored in his claybank den some distance from the den of Naka.

Muttering her curses, Naka wheeled and darted back to sniff sharply at the entrance to her den. Then, satisfied that her cublings were secure, she turned and struck water beyond the riffles, to head on downstream.

She rode the fast current with easy grace, passing like a lifeless creature beneath overhanging foliage.

Shortly she raised her head at the sound of roaring water. This was a new sound to her, reminding her of the roar of fall at a beaver dam... But there were no beavers on this creek.

She turned in to the bank, climbed out, shook water from her coat, then moved swiftly, but cautiously on.

Suddenly she came to a halt, her lips peeling back across her strong teeth as she caught the tang of man scent, but with this dread scent was that of fish!

She saw them now, silvery flashes in the moonlight, as grayling and pike hurled themselves in a vain attempt to leap that crudely erected log dam.

Quivering, Naka crept in, wholly alert. Her eyes gleamed as she saw the flash of many fish already caught in a gill net stretched just below the log barrier.

Not for some time did she dive to attack, not until she was satisfied that the man scent was not immediately fresh.

Fish now scattered at her approach.

Naka settled to a slow, powerful swim, her strong, short forepaws paddling her along. Her eyes were focused on the glistening tail of a big grayling ahead.

Like a black shadow, Naka followed. Now her back muscles rippled. She coiled, arching her back, then struck, but her jaws clacked sharply. She had missed!

She turned, for the strong current had forced her back. Again she settled into her powerful stroke, sharply recovering lost distance. When next she struck, her timing was deadly accurate: a large grayling flapped helplessly in her strong jaws.

Shortly, she was on the creek flat where,

chuttering ecstatically, she swiftly severed the fish head and eagerly began the skillful surgery of extraction of the succulent brains and juices.

Licking her chops, she reared her head and searched every quarter for danger signs before settling to begin the major feast on the solid back meat.

She had barely stripped half a filet from the bones when she whirled, her head raised, cocked on one side.

From her den area there came a wild cry—a piercing scream.

It was the alarm sounded by old Chug, a cry which penetrated far along the valley, to be caught and echoed by the banshee-like wails of old Moakwa the loon sentinel, at the lake.

Naka was already hurrying back to her den zone.



BACKED against a clay bank, his face a hideous mask as he spat and screeched at Chug, Hee-Chee, a big tom lynx, was bayed. His tufted ears twitched sharply as he arched his back, poised himself ready to slash with a set of roweling foreclaws at Chug's next attack.

Old Chug foamed at the mouth. He had no fear of this bigger creature whose scent had brought him bounding from his own sleeping quarters. It mattered not to Chug that Hee-Chee might have been on a tour of innocent curiosity. To the male otters at this season of the year, all alien creatures were a threat to the safety of the cubs.

Naka glided forward, to turn, a silent shadow shape, into the low underbrush. Chug knew of her presence, of her intent. He suddenly stretched his sinuous form, only to flit it sharply out of range of those lynx claws as Hee-Chee struck forward.

It was then, as the lynx stretched, that Naka leaped from the rear. Expertly she landed on the big cat's back, her fangs at once sinking through his fur, his skin, his flesh.

The area became a wild amphitheater, a place of hideous screams and screeches, sounds which aroused the waterfowl at the nearest lake. Led by old Moakwa, the ducks, rails, coots, all blended their cries in accompaniment to the battle cries of the battlers at the creek.

All at once the old lynx whirled and rolled, dislodging Naka. Like a blurred streak old Chug struck. The big cat coiled and lashed out with his full battery of four sets of talons. A single claw raked Chug's flank. His eyes jetting multi-colored flame, he whipped back, as Naka struck, to lay open the side of Hee-Chee's throat.

With a wild screech, the lynx whirled away to go bounding off into the dense thicket.

Naka followed him for some distance but shortly whipped about, to scamper back to her mate. She flicked Chug's torn side with her warm tongue, softly chirping to him.

Snuffling the hated cat scent from his nose, the male otter whipped about and slid into the creek where until the bleeding was stopped, he rolled, dived, twisted, or lay silently paddling below the surface.

His first aid done, he climbed out to the mud flat, shook himself, then crept forward, but as he approached Naka, on guard at the den entrance, he was backed off by a series of snarls.

Not until the cubs were old enough to begin their swimming and sporting lessons in the creek and mud slides would Naka allow even their sire to get too close to them.

She lay watching the endless capers of the broken water at the riffles where the fast current seemed for ever to be shaking out freshly washed garments to be bleached by the moonlight.

Slowly Naka closed her eyes and as the wilderness night deepened in a silence broken only by the music of the creek and the whispering of the soft breeze in the near by aspen tops, she slept...

Naka and her mate fished daily, nightly, at the turbulent pool below the log dam. When their bellies were amply filled, they fished for the sport of it, for the exercise. They cut the heads from the fish entrapped in the mesh of the gill net, thus allowing many decapitated bodies to float away.

Naka's cubs thrived. She, now spent more time near the home area, scrabbling for crayfish. There were times in the soft sunsets when alone she besport herself, instinctively realizing that she must continue her exercises.

Old Chug grew fat on the fish so easily obtained. He lay back and belched in vulgar contentment, to watch his sleek, glossy spouse roll and dive and tumble and slide.

Now and then she paused to rear her head and screech in his direction.



CAME a night when the northwesterly breeze brought fresh scent of a man creature. Naka padded nervously back and forth at the entrance to her den. The wilderness night seemed charged with foreboding. Naka could not catch Chug's scent. He had long since left for the fishing waters. She was, herself, ravenously hungry, but was waiting for Chug's return before she set out to fish.

When the false dawn lights cast their mysterious flush in the eastern sky, Naka glided into her den. Chug had not returned. She nursed her younglings, chattered to them as if cautioning them not to attempt to stray . . . She must have food!

She struck the stream, making fast time

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as she paddled down with the current. When she heard the roar of the tumbling water, she quivered, for the scent of man was sharp, filling her with a sense of dread... Yet, stronger than the man scent was that of the trapped fish.

Then came Chug's scent. Its tang alarmed the she-otter. She turned into the bank, climbed out and shook her body, but remained poised, a foreleg doubled up under her as her keen nose sniffed. Chug's scent was charged with the musky tang of fear, distress!

Now, above the roar of the falls, she heard Chug's shrill scream, a sound that caused every nerve fiber in Naka's body to grow taut. She darted forward, but halted sharply to raise her head as she sniffed and listened. She heard the sound of her mate's body threshing about. Shortly she was in close, though she approached in quivering dread, for Chug's right hind paw was caught securely in the closed jaws of a steel trap.

Chug's lust for fish, for the sport of fishing, had robbed him of some of his wisdom. Over-feeding had dulled his usually keen brain.

Naka crept in closer, but in his state of mounted agitation and great fear, he whirled and struck at her. She backed off, chirping, clucking to him as she might have called to her younglings, but in his frenzy he resented her soft sounds.

Naka turned away and shortly she had clamped her jaws on the back of a five-pound pike. She ate her fill, then with part of the fish carcass in her jaws, she scurried back to Chug, laying the meat within his reach, but he spat and foam flecked from his clacking jaws.

She lay glaring at her mate, then pricked her short ears sharply forward as she heard a new sound—the sound of teeth gnawing bone. Chug in his desperation had resorted to the only course left to him—the grim surgery of gnawing off his foot in order to effect escape.

Suddenly a whipping, shifting wind brought Naka snarling to her feet. A low throaty snarl escaped her as she picked up man scent... Spring winds were fickle, blowing hot and cold, they whirled to form sharp local eddies... Thus Naka picked up the danger scent coming from her den zone.

Clucking, she whirled away and shortly cut water to begin her top-speed rush to the den.

As she climbed out to the home bank, her body became electrified with concern, for never before had she been so close to the dread tang of fresh man scent.

Suddenly a piteous little scream sounded from one of her cubs. Naka darted forward!

The man was stooped, digging at the den entrance. Nearby lay the starkly dead body of a cub, but Rolph Nathan, the homesteader, trapper, fish-poacher, knew that another cub cringed inside the den. He grunted as he continued to shovel.

The best means of destroying such varmints was to destroy their young, was his philosophy. He practiced this grim science each spring, digging out the young of the red foxes and coyotes. Otters were a special menace, a menace to his mink and muskrat trap sets.

Not once had it occurred to him that in damming the creek he had cut off the source of otter food supply. Nor did he consider that such creatures had a prior claim to the wilderness and its fish.

Nathan had hunted skillfully before he at last found the otter den. Tell-tale scraps of fish heads had betrayed Naka. At the dam, the man had cleverly laid his steel traps, but especially did he want the den of the female. Already he had killed one of the cubs; the other was within easy reach.

Now his mittened hand was reaching into the den when suddenly he spun, almost toppling over backward at a wild scream from his rear. He gasped as in the half light he looked into the terrible eyes of Naka. As she struck forward, he lashed out with his mittened hand, but Naka's fangs slashed, and ripped. With a howl of pain as the blood spurted from a nicked hand vein, Nathan struck out with his shovel, but Naka flitted her body away with the elusiveness of a shadow.

Screeching, she hurled her long body forward. Again her fangs accurately struck the target—this time the man's wrist, as he hurled his shovel.

Naka was grazed, but she took the glancing blow going away, rolling, and suffered no more serious damage than to be momentarily thrown off balance.

The man voiced his hatred. He stooped to pick up his fallen shovel, but was suddenly aware of the seriousness of his wounds. In a panic he wheeled away, to rush to the creek riffles.

Naka slid swiftly to her den. She seized her trembling young one and shortly had him securely hidden in a dense alder thicket where she subdued his little cries of fear.

She cocked her head, listening to the man-made sounds, the crunch of heavy feet on shingle.

Now, grunting, she turned on her side and chirped an invitation to her surviving cub.



THE cub at last asleep, Naka padded back and forth, giving out sorrowing sounds. She moved in to flick her dead youngling with her tongue, calling softly, but could not restore it to life. Now she seized the little body in her jaws and carried it off, laying it in amongst the rock and clay rubble, at some distance from the den.

It was on her return to the den zone that she caught the strong scent of Old Chug. She clacked her jaws when she tanged blood scent.

Chug was minus a hind paw. He came in close, muttering small sounds as he turned over on his side.

Naka advanced, to drop beside him, her tongue laving his leg stump.

When she had backed away, old Chug limped on to his favorite claybank den, there to coil to rest, to wait for the throbbing pain to find surcease in sleep.

Her lone cub secure on her back, Naka struck water. For several nights Naka had been forced to take her youngling with her to the fishing waters. Old Chug had failed her. She brought fish back to him.

But when again the man scent became a pronounced threat, she decided to shift range. Today, she swam on toward the lake, Chug following far in her wake.

At the small lake, Naka found an old deserted muskrat lodge, into which she dug as a haven for her cub.

However small the lake, it was a breeding sanctuary for many species of waterfowl—ducks, rails, coots and the loons.

Now and then Naka found a small pike, but the fish were few. In the mudflats she scabbled for crayfish and other small crustacean life, but gradually her sides grew gaunt. Her cubling, having access now to a double supply of food, thrived. He took his first swimming lessons, but many times Naka had to go to his rescue when in his instinctive desire for adventure he strayed too far from the lodge.

Old Chug was failing. His leg stump wound had not responded to the natural treatment of continuous washing.

Thus it was Naka found herself alone, her source of food gravely curtailed.

This evening, as the sunset's afterglow flooded the lake with softly purpled rose tints, Naka glided on through the tule beds. A late hatching of pintail ducks had attracted her. She could hear the shrill piping of the hatchlings. She had watched them in the late afternoons charge in line abreast at a horde of mayflies.

Now Naka's eyes flashed as she saw, ahead, the pintail mother leading her younglings into the safety of a small back bay.

Naka dived and with easy grace, paddled on, her sleek form cutting through the deep purpled shadows below the surface.

Naka's underwater endurance was amazing. Now, as if by sheer instinct, her head drove upward, her sharp jaws struck. Sucking in a sharp breath, she crash dived, a limp duckling form in her jaws.

The mother duck had heard the light flapping of immature wings. She sent out raucous cries, and shortly from the far end of the lake, old Moakwa, the loon king, flapped his strong wings as he pierced the valley country with his fearful cries.

Naka, now on the surface, quivered. Her own mother's sleek body had been impaled by the terrible bill of a loon. Instinctively Naka knew that Moakwa and his kind were capable of terrific speed. Of all the water creatures, there was not a swifter swimmer than Moakwa.

The general alarm was on, sounding from all points—cries which warned all creatures that a deadly enemy had come to the lake.

At the muskrat lodge, Naka dropped the duckling. She snarled savagely at the soft cluckings of old Chug. As he approached her, she shrieked a warning, then settled to enjoy her feast, leaving scarcely a scrap of the succulent meat for him.

During this period of the rearing of her young, Naka held fast to the prerogative of her queenly majesty over her mate. Not often did her mate stay so close to her during this season of the year, save when he came to romp and gambol with the younglings on the mud slides.

Chug lay stretched atop the lodge, blinking down at his mate, but Naka was adamant.

Not yet had she hunted sufficient food for her own needs.

From mid-lake, a lone sorrowing Canada gander honked, his voice sounds caught by the far hills and flung back along the valley.

Naka swam out to resume her hunting. This time her flashing teeth struck and closed on the leg of a handsome mallard youngling in the flapper stage.

Later, at the lodge, there were some scraps left for Chug... So passed Naka's first few days and nights at her new hunting waters.



TODAY she played with her now vigorous cub. There seemed no end of desire for this water sport, the swift rushes, the leaps and rolls and dives, or those mock battles with his mother.

Still stretched out lazily on the top of his lodge, old Chug blinked as he watched his kindred at their vigorous exercises. He was failing rapidly. When Naka clucked invitations to him to join her on hunting foray, he grunted and stretched himself more comfortably, but he was always on hand when Naka brought in food.

Now, finished with her play, Naka nosed her young one from her side. She turned and swam to the lodge, climbing up alongside her mate. She lifted her head, weaving it from side to side on her stretched, sinuous neck, as she coned the far shore.

The time had come to leave old Chug to his own devices.

Clucking gutturally, she dived and, her

youngling flanking her, she swam on to new range.

There was no danger sign. The waterfowl were silently resting, when Naka at last found the bay she had sought. She cut in through a dense patch of tules, headed for the bank, which rose, an old grass-covered beaver dam. Shortly she was digging into the bank. Before the full dusk had draped the wilds in a soft mantle of purpled gray, she had burrowed out a haven for herself and her cub.

When the cub rushed to her flank, she thrust him back. The time of the weaning had arrived. He snarled at her, struck at her, but Naka sharply disciplined him. Each season she was faced with the same problem: that of overriding her deep sense of tender motherhood, with firm, natural judgment in the interest of the further development of her growing young.

From now on, he must learn to get along on small, tender meat scraps, with an occasional nurse only.

The following day, her cub trailing her, she led on through the dense tules. This new environment appealed strongly to the young one's desire for adventure. When he glimpsed a youngling muskrat suddenly dive, the otter cub whirled and dived to give chase.

He swam swiftly. When the rat broke water, so did the otter cub. He arched his back and leaped, but in his excitement failed to see that grim shadow cast by a swiftly plummeting bald eagle.

It was Naka, suddenly missing her youngling, that saw the diving sky killer. She screamed a cry of warning. In the nick of time her cubling heard and dived.

Yeepek, the bald eagle, shrieked as he soared for altitude. He had patiently watched the coming and going of the youngling muskrat brood. When he saw the larger one, the otter cub, he struck.

Now his eyes gleamed savagely as he wheeled. His wide wings closed and like a falling meteorite he struck sharply down at Naka.

Yeepek was usually, habitually, a land hunter. He was not used to the speed, the maneuverability, of such water creatures as Naka. She was alert and leaped to meet him, flirting her agile body to one side as her jaws closed on a mouthful of his feathers.

Again he wheeled and struck, but the elusive she-otter had dived to safety, to swim swiftly under water to retrieve her cub.

Under water, Naka's instincts seemed sharper. Naka instinctively sensed that of all the water creatures, Moakwa the loon was her greatest enemy. It was to the home waters of Moakwa and his kindred that Naka now led her cub.

Today, old Moakwa drowsed in his favorite back bay. His mate, her head tucked in alongside a wing shoulder, also drowsed, for the sun was very warm.

The young brood, bigger than the mallard flappers, dived and hunted in apparent security, knowing their parents were close by.

Naka half turned, to touch her cubling gently with her nose. It was her silent signal to stand by for attack.

Moakwa and his kindred were the tyrants of the lakes and ponds, resenting the presence of all other water creatures, which they often attacked without provocation.

As a young loon dived deep, Naka's shadowy form struck. Her strong jaws clamped on the youngling's neck. There was a loud splashing as for a few moments he flapped his wings and legs.

Keen of hearing, old Moakwa was instantly awake, alert. His strong bill gaped. Shortly the lake zone was shattered by his deathly laughing cries. . . Naka, even in the deeps, could hear.

The loon flapper was heavy. It was as much as the she-otter could manage, to drag the now limp creature along. She glanced sharply about her, to find her cub, frightened by the wild cries of Moakwa, in close to her flank.

Now she turned in toward the old beaver dam and shortly she and the cubling were feasting, the hungry cub savagely ripping, tearing into the tender flesh, reveling in the sharp fishy taste of the loon.

As the otters coiled in their den to rest that night, Naka pricked her sharp ears back and forth as she heard the continued cries of Moakwa. They were the sorrowful but chilling cries of a creature whose wild brain is charged with a desire for vengeance. . .



HER exquisite glossy coat coppered by the last flush of the setting sun, Naka, this evening, played with her young one. He had become an expert swimmer, expert in the games. Tirelessly they besport themselves in a screened back bay.

Suddenly, wild pandemonium broke. Naka was suddenly electrified by the wild, piercing cry of old Chug—a distress cry.

She turned her cub in to the bank, clucking sharp warnings. Then she wheeled, and hurtled on in her leaping, rolling method of increased speed swimming.

Now she heard the flapping of the great loon wings. They were attacking old Chug, had found him lazing at the muskrat lodge.

Old Moakwa saw the she-otter. He whirled, his fierce eyes flashing as he struck, but Naka, the elusive dark shadow, dived.

When she broke water, the female loon hissed and flapped toward her. When Naka dived, she almost brushed the flank of her mate. Old Chug was swimming sluggishly, seeming to have lost all sense



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of direction. Naka touched him with her nose turning him, as she started to lead him to safety, but his lungs were at bursting point. He rose, breaking water, Naka following.

He had scarcely surfaced when the great dagger-like bill of old Moakwa impaled him.

Chug sagged helplessly, his blood staining the water. Naka clamped her jaws securely on his shoulder and attempted to give him a tow, but his body quivered in death. Savagely she struck upward, to recharge her lungs with air. For a moment she reared her head. She glimpsed the loon pair swimming sharply back and forth. Naka's eyes flashed as she coiled and dived.

She swam gracefully, conserving her energy now. Again her nose broke water, but only for a brief moment.

Now, under water again Naka's hind legs began to strike out. Up...up she swam, then suddenly her back arched; her body stretched upward and her strong jaws clamped...

She was almost lifted wholly from the water by the great power of Moakwa of the strong wings. She coiled her head and dived, but again, the strong-billed tyrant loon rose, flapping.

Never had Naka been called upon to exercise the full power of all her battle spirit and strength as now. She clung tenaciously to the leg hold on the loon. He whirled and attempted to buffet her, but again and again she dragged him down, then suddenly as for the first time she had him almost wholly submerged, she relinquished her hold on his leg and struck at his throat. Down—down, she forced herself, until at last her vise-like jaws cut off his breathing. Moakwa flapped in the last throes of death...Naka's vengeance was complete!

She released her jaw hold, and the great speckled body rose to the surface. Naka followed, flashing her eyes, screaming her curses, which sent the female loon scuttering across the water.

The following day, Naka led her youngling to a high bank which inclined sharply up from a tributary creek. Her body well saturated with water, she climbed a path she had cleared of rubble on the slope. She shook herself, muddying up

the slope. Her young one in time emulated her actions. Patiently they carried water until the slope became a greasy slide down which in the full ecstasy of delight, they tobogganed again and again into the small creek.

It was while poised, ready to hurl herself again down the slide, that Naka checked her movements. From the far shore of the lake a sharp clap of thunder had come. Forepaw doubled under her, she clucked a warning to her cub down below at the creek bank. Suddenly she quivered. From the far tules a gush of flame gouted. She cringed at the clap of thunder, then watched a pintail drake topple in mid-air. The man creature broke from cover, to move to the meadow flat to pick up his kill.

Shortly, hugging the lake shore, Naka led her cub away. Man again had rendered her hunting range untenable.

Naka left the loon lake, to travel across country.

Small creatures scuttled from her path, but she made no attempt to molest them as every now and then she reared her weaving head, to sniff sharply into the wind. There was a strong fresh tang of fish on the breeze.

Before full night closed in, Naka brought her youngling to a small lagoon, a remote pond almost completely fringed by tall well-fronded evergreens.

At a small feeder creek, with high banks, Naka called a halt. She ran sharply to the edge of the creek bank, her eyes flashing as she glimpsed an occasional streak of silver...Fish!

Shortly, her cub curled close beside her in a natural cave in the bank, Naka glared at the giant spruces which, in the light of the waning moon, dipped their heads deep into the dark purple shadows of her new home. Her eyes closed. She grunted in contentment, the contentment of her discovery of fish deep in the hinterland where, so far, no man scent was evident.

Tomorrow she and her cubling would feel the sharp pangs of hunger, but close by there were trout and grayling for the taking when, again, the sleek form of Naka's deathly black shadow would haunt the depths as she struck for her own survival and for the survival of her youngling cub.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere



INCA Gold.

Query:—I am writing in regard to the ancient Incan graves of which a great number are supposedly in Peru.

What are the Peruvian laws covering the finding of gold in these graves? And how are they enforced? They certainly can't watch every mound!

I am told a great many people make their living by digging in these ancient graves but that it is unlikely to find anything because the nobles and peasants were buried together and their graves can't be distinguished apart. If so, why hasn't anyone gone in with a metal detector to locate the graves in which precious metals are to be found?

Also where are the graves of the Chimus and Chavins generally to be found? In what part of Peru?

—B. R. Blair
Kansas City, Missouri

Reply by Edgar Young:—The cemeteries where these *huacas*, or treasures, were formerly found were not of Incas or their subjects, the Quechuas, but two entirely different races who occupied considerable territory down on the semi-arid coastal plain and who were about as advanced as the Incas and their subjects. The Incas were a small hierarchy of closely inbred rulers whose violet complexions and big ears set them apart from the two million or so Quechuas who were their subjects; and old prints show a striking resemblance of these Incas to the rulers of ancient Iran and India. The main capital of the Inca Empire was at Cuzco up in the highlands, but due to a falling out between two Incas another capital had been set up at Quito, Ecuador, and many of the present buildings at Quito were built of heavy masonry centuries ago, by Quechua artisans who used tar to join the big stones together.

Prior to the Conquest by the Spaniards, the realm of the Gran Chimu near the present port of Trujillo, and the other empire whose capital was about twenty-five miles from the present city of Lima were brought under the sway of the Inca rulers in the highlands, mainly by kindness and propaganda. The Incas were sun worshippers, a

type of religion possibly brought from Iran by the first Inca who arrived with his sister-wife: Manco Capac and Mama Coya Occla, who taught the savage aborigines how to farm, weave cloth, raise domestic animals, and other rudimentary arts and sciences. The Quimus were sea-worshippers, the fish being their fetish; and the other race near what is now present Lima apparently worshipped a holy city which was so sacrosanct that a person who had been there was so sanctified that he could high-hat a person going to the city, so two paved highways were maintained in order to preserve peace.

The Incas regarded gold as a holy metal because it was yellow like the sun and each bit of gold that was found by the two million subject Indians had been brought to Cuzco back through the centuries and a great mass had accumulated which was preserved in the form of globes, tiles for the temple, and for utilitarian use in the palaces of the Incas who were supposed to be descended from a son and daughter of the sun. This is where most of the gold came from that went back to Spain in hundreds of galleons, although the Spaniards also gutted the cemeteries of the other races down along the coast, who were accustomed to bury golden images of fish and other treasures along with the embalmed corpses in extensive "cities of the dead." These individual treasures (*huacas*) represented small quantities of gold ranging from just a few hundred dollars' worth on up into the thousands. The largest one unearthed surreptitiously by treasure hunters ran to a reputed two million dollars' worth of gold and is known as "The Little Fish Treasure." The legendary "Big Fish Treasure" supposed to contain many times this value has never been unearthed.

During my time down there it was open season on these old cemeteries. On my first visit to one of them I met a well-dressed German chap who had an immense armful of dried human arms which he had wrenched from corpses and when he halted to talk to me he dumped the arms upon the ground for me to look at. They were apparently the shriveled arms of women and girls whose fingers were loaded with heavy gold rings and there were big gold bracelets, set with gems, on their wrists. Later, when I arrived at the cemetery I saw scores of treasure hunters digging into graves and

tossing the bodies about in frantic haste as they looked for quantities of gold. I later saw the same thing going on eight miles inland from Trujillo and I was surprised to find the burial clothes and shrouds in a very well preserved condition, which, of course was due to the extremely dry climate.

It was years later and only some twenty years ago that the Peruvian government passed the proper laws to protect these graves from further desecration and armed guards were put to patrolling these ancient burial places. It was certainly a case of locking the door after the horse was stolen, but even today there are valuable relics dug from these places either by stealth or by archeologists under Peruvian government supervision. A well-preserved linen shirt is worth \$2,500, an unchipped "whistling duck" is worth \$500, and various household relics are worth fancy prices. The law is that none of this can be shipped out unless government permission is obtained and a lot of red tape complied with to make it legal; but from what I hear there is some illicit barter still going on in relics, and now and then someone finds a *huaca* and manages to get away with the gold.

Up country from Trujillo the site of the ancient capital of the Chimus, a walled city comprising some twelve square miles, is now being used as cane fields by a large German-financed sugar-mill; and many of the old aqueducts the Chimus used for irrigation have been restored and put back into service. The Little Fish Treasure was found on a tip furnished by an Indian chief who was double-crossed out of his portion by the treasure hunters. He then told them the Big Fish Treasure contained a much greater quantity of gold than the one they unearthed but no persuasion could make him divulge the secret. Anyone with government permission and the proper equipment might be able to find the Big Fish if it is actually there.

Also, if someone had the time to go there for a long stay and settled in this region he might find the cemetery of a town or village that has been overlooked up to now where *huacas* might be found, and the gold unearthed without damaging the ancient mummies in their tombs.

SOME notes on the N.R.A.

Query:—In reading the October issue of *Adventure*, I noticed your reply to Mr. Rubenfeldt concerning membership in the National Rifle Association and I would like very much to know more about this organization—also I would appreciate it very much if you would send me an application blank.

What are the duties of a member in this association, are conventions held? And do they have local chapters or just the National branch? I do not think this city has such an outfit, at least not to my knowledge.

—Donald Wirt
Roanoke, Virginia

Reply by Donegan Wiggins—I enclose an application for an Annual Membership in the National Rifle Association. Most cities have local branches, but the Head Office is in Washington, D.C., as you will see from the address.

Conventions are held annually; this year the meeting place was Denver, Colorado, and we rather believe it will be in one of the more Eastern states next year. From what I gather, they are improving yearly.

The monthly publication, *The American Rifleman*, comes to each member each month, and I know of no other shooting publication that can compare to it, in scope of interest, and high quality of authority. Its staff are practical riflemen and handgun shooters, who know exactly where they speak.

In case you DO decide to join the Association, at some future time I'd really enjoy a postcard telling me how you like the set-up.

A RMOR-PIERCING arrows.

Query:—As a college junior majoring in history, there are a few things I would like to know about the English longbow. What was the pull of the longbow? What was the maximum range, and maximum efficient range? What woods besides yew were they made of? How long were the cloth-yard arrows (in modern measurement) which are discharged so often in fiction? What was the penetrating ability of a longbow shaft? Is my information correct that the English longbow developed from the Welsh longbow? I would also appreciate any information about any books on the subject which you might know about. Please excuse the prepositional endings, but I have never learned how to avoid them . . . progressive education you know!

—W. Richard Spain,
Long Beach, Calif.

Reply by Earl Powell:—The weight (or pull) of the old so-called "English" longbow was of course fitted to the strength of the user. For warfare it ranged from around 60 lbs. pull to around 150 lbs. or so. As to the maximum range of the weapon, we do not know. Marvelous tales have come down from the past and from what we can learn it was about the same as those now in use, and a good bow would shoot from 250 yards and up. Modern bows have shot as far on the average, but plenty of them have shot over 300 yards and with especially constructed bows and arrows over 600 yards, but these as a rule are not to be classified as a longbow. The superiority of the longbow lay in its carrying a longer and heavier missile than the short bow and with greater penetration.

These longbows were made of yew, ash, wych elm, mostly—and the arrows were from 28 inches long up to a full 36 inches. While the average man draws about 28 inches and maybe a bit more, yet when a long dagger-like point six inches long and with a three or four sided cross section was added it easily reached a full yard.

As to penetrating ability: I have taken a longbow and with some specially made "Bockin" points have taken a trench helmet like used in War No. 1 and riddled it at 20 paces. There are suits of armor in the Tower of London taken from the bodies of French knights, with holes in the BREAST PLATE, and then went through the man and the points protruded through the BACK PLATES. In Florida I killed alligators with them.

Coming from the family that led the longest fight for freedom that is recorded, which lasted for nine hundred years (the house of Gwynedd) it is naturally of interest to me to give you the correct history of the longbow developed by a people who fought an enemy outnumbering them about fourteen to one. They finally developed a weapon that somewhat evened the score. When the English finally smothered the Welsh by main force, they at once enrolled the terrible Welsh archers in their armies. The best of the so called "English" archers were really Welsh and it is really the WELSH longbow.

Write to "The Feathered Shaft" 4007 Dupont Ave. North, Minneapolis, Minnesota, for a sample copy and where to get books.

A TIMEPIECE to treasure.

Query:—In reading my current copy of *Adventure*, I find that you have joined that great list of Ask Adventure experts.

It so happens that I have a watch that I am very much interested in, and I hope you will be kind enough to tell me what you know about it.

It was given to me by my father as a birthday present. He was killed shortly after that at Hobo Hot Springs, which is at the foot of White Mountain located at the head of Kern River Canyon, Kern County, California. Incidentally, at the time, he was searching for the buried treasure of Juan Murrietta, famous, or infamous, early-day California bandit. It is supposed to be hidden in a cave somewhere on the slopes of White Mountain.

To get to the watch: It has a gold case—hunting type. On the face it reads: Jules Jurgensen—Copenhagen. The works read: No. 161—Jules Jurgensen—Copenhagen.

Dad told me at the time that it was handmade. At least, it is a beautiful piece of workmanship. Will sincerely appreciate

anything you can tell me about it, including age, number of them made, and probable value if any.

—D. L. Cook,
Venice, California

Reply by John W. McGrath:—Allow me to congratulate you. You have a very valuable watch in your possession. I cannot put a possible value on it; in all business transactions of this nature, it simmers down to a willing buyer and a willing seller.

Following is a history of the Jurgensen family of clock and watch makers.

Jurgensen. Joergen, Copenhagen; died 1811. Urban, Copenhagen, son of the foregoing; born 1776, died 1830; an eminent maker; author of "The Higher Horological Art" and "*Principes de la Mesure du Temps*"; Jurgensen was associated with the leading men of his day; he experimented with compensation balances made of brass and platinum, and strongly advocated the use of gold springs for marine chronometers for the Danish navy, and very successful metallic thermometers. Louis Urban, Copenhagen, eldest son and successor of Urban, Copenhagen; born 1806, died 1867. Jules Frederik Jurgensen, another son of Urban, was born in 1808 at Locle during a short sojourn of his parents there; and upon attaining manhood he returned to Locle where he founded a business: his watches were highly esteemed in America; he died in 1877.

As to the "No. 161"—that number signifies the one hundred and sixty-first watch made by the maker. When you consider the time involved in making a watch by hand, this specimen was probably made in the winter of his career; I also assume that the case was not made by Jurgensen; you may find a "Hall Mark" on the case indicating its maker. Try your local library for this data. The hall marking of all watch cases of gold or silver made in Great Britain and Ireland was, and still is, compulsory in the above-mentioned countries. I feel that the case deserves as much research as the movement. If you find the "Hall Mark" consult the librarian for further data.

OLD IRONSIDES.

Query:—I would like to know the original weight of the frigate *Constitution* (Old Ironsides) and how many guns did this ship carry? Also, was a commemorative postage stamp issued in honor of this vessel?

—Joseph C. Horvath,
Cincinnati, Ohio

Reply by Frank Herold:—I'm sorry for the slight delay in replying to your query, but I bumped into some very conflicting information on the number of guns the

Constitution carried so I wrote direct to her present commanding officer (she's at the U. S. Naval Shipyard, Boston, Mass.)

Here's the full dope.

1. She was built at Hartt's Shipyard, Boston, during 1794-1797 and was launched (on the third attempt) on October 21, 1797. Her overall length is 204 feet; length on the lead water line is 175 feet; her beam was 43.6 feet and the depth of her hold was 14.3 feet. Her best sailing draft was 21 feet forward and 23 feet aft. She had a displacement of 2,200 tons.

2. Her original armament of 44 guns was changed from time to time. During her early history so many changes were made in the battery that it is hard to say just what battery would be typical of any period. Anyhow: 18 of her original 24-pounder gun deck guns were purchased in England and marked with a crown and "G.R."; 12 24-pounder short guns for the gun deck were manufactured in the U.S.; 16 of her 18-pounder spar deck carronade guns were obtained from the State of Massachusetts and were probably those captured from the *H.M.S. Somerset* in 1779. That totals 46 guns, not 44, but it is believed that two of the 18-pounders were bored out as 24-pounders and used as bow chasers.

Sometime during 1802-1811 the 18-pounder British guns were removed from the spar deck. Shortly before 1812 twenty 32-pounder carronade guns were installed on the spar deck.

In 1804 Commodore Preble obtained six 24-pounders at Naples, Italy, and they were used against the Tripolitans. Later the spar deck battery was changed to 42-pounder carronades, but these were found too heavy for the hull structure and replaced with 32-pounder carronades by Capt. Hull.

Her battery at the beginning of the War of 1812 was:

Gun Deck: 18 long and 12 short 24-pounders.

Spar Deck: Quarter Deck: 16 32-pounders (carronades).

Forecastle: 6 32-pounders (carronades): 1 18-pounder and 2 24-pounders (bow chasers).

This totals 55 guns at the beginning of the War of 1812.

After Hull's victory two of the carronades were removed leaving 53 guns.

In restoring her battery during 1927-1931 it was determined, after considerable research, to follow quite closely the battery found on board the frigate *United States*, sister ship of the *Constitution*, in the year 1835 as shown in the Inspection Return of Ordnance for the frigate *United States* at the New York Navy Yard, September 10, 1835.

As now restored the *Constitution* has 52 guns, 30 on the gun deck and 22 on the spar deck, as follows:

Gun Deck: 18 24-pounders, long, British type.

12 24-pounders, short, American type.

Spar Deck: 16 32-pounder carronades on the quarter-deck.

4 32-pounder carronades on the forecastle.

2 24-pounder (18 pounders bored out to 24 pounders) on the forecastle as bow chasers.

The difference in length and weight between long and short 24-pounders is 13 inches and 600 pounds per gun. The reason for using long and short types was for the purpose of reducing weight at the two ends of the ship. The shorts were of great value when operating guns in limited spaces (which involved the diminished half breadths of the gun deck at both ends of the ship).

3. "Old Ironsides" was honored on her 150th Anniversary (October 21, 1947) with a commemorative postage stamp. Enclosed is a specimen of it—courtesy of "Old Ironsides" herself.

FENCING instruction.

Query:—I have recently become interested in Fencing and have decided to take it up as a sport. As there are no instructors within several hundred miles of my home I shall be forced to learn, to the best of my ability, out of a book.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would give me the name or names of any Fencing instruction manuals that you consider worthwhile and where I may obtain them. Also could you tell me where I might purchase inexpensive but decent fencing masks?

—Clark Lane
Redding, Calif.

Reply by Col. John V. Grombach:—I would recommend that you get a fencing manual entitled "Fencing" by Vince, published by A.S. Barnes and Company of 501 Fifth Avenue, New York City and priced at \$1.25. I would also recommend that you go to the nearest large public library and pore through the various books on fencing available there.

I also recommend that you write to the Amateur Fencers' League of America, 161 East 91st Street, New York 28, N. Y., and ask them to mail you a manual of fencing, rule books, etc., which they have on hand.

Several other good fencing manuals are available, one written by the Breckinridges, father and son, an old manual written by Louis Senac and one written by the coach at the United States Naval Academy and I believe published by the Naval Academy printing shop. I think if you will write the Naval Academy Athletic Association you might possibly be able to purchase a copy of this last named book from them.

For equipment, I suggest you get catalogs and establish contact with the following: Mr. Santelli, 169 Spring Street, New York City; Alex Taylor, 22 East 42nd Street, New York City.



ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS



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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD FREECH, *c/o Adventure*.

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, *c/o Adventure*.

Auto Racing—WALT WOESTMAN, 2310 Midlothian Drive, Altadena, Calif.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, *c/o Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, *c/o Adventure*.

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, *c/o Adventure*.

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—JACK DENTON SCOTT, R.F.D., Roxbury, Conn.

Fencing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, *c/o Adventure*.

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, *c/o Adventure*.

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, *c/o Adventure*.

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, *c/o Adventure*.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorecycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, *c/o Adventure*.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 3325 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and foreign; wing shooting and field trials; gunsmithing*—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skating—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1117 Myrtle Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Songs of Campfire, Foc'sle and Bunkhouse—HARRY KIRBY MCCLINTOCK, 3911 So. Pacific Ave., San Pedro, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THURSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U.S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, *c/o Adventure*.

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, *c/o Adventure*.

Horology: *The science of time and timekeepers*—JOHN W. MCGRATH, 434 W. 120th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, *c/o Adventure*.

Photography: Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: Telegraphy, telephony history; receiver construction, portable sets—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o Adventure.

Railroads: In the United States, Mexico and Canada—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o Adventure.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1117 Myrtle Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o Adventure.

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o Adventure.

United States Navy—FRANK HEROLD, 1647 Charon Rd., Jacksonville, Fla.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o Adventure.

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o Adventure.

Federal Investigation Activities—Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o Adventure.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o Adventure.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o Adventure.

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, 26 George St., Manly, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. 2 *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, c/o Adventure. 3 *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o Adventure. 4 *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o Adventure.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. 2 *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o Adventure. 3 ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. 4 ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

★**The British Isles**—THOMAS ROWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, c/o Adventure. 2 *Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o Adventure.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o Adventure.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, c/o Adventure.

★**Newfoundland**—CAPT. LEO C. MURPHY, J.P., Great War Veterans' Office, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. 2 ★*West Coast beginning with State of Sonora; Central and Southern Mexico, including Tabasco, Chiapas, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatan*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Central Sanalona, S. A., Costa Rica, Sinaloa, Mexico.

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Alaska—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, c/o Adventure.

Western U. S., Part 1—Pacific Coast States—FRANK WINCH, c/o Adventure. 2 *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1412 West Fruit, Albuquerque, New Mexico. 3 *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, P. O. Box 297, Elko, Nev. 4 *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. 5 *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, 616 N. 3rd St., Phoenix, Ariz. 6 *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S.—Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana Swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1117 Myrtle Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

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THE TRAIL AHEAD

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Adventure
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ON SALE MARCH 10

(Continued from page 8)

fied" the country, built railways, good roads, and ports. At the beginning of the war, the boom was on. The war did not halt it. Casablanca tripled in size. Production of cotton, fruit, canning of fish, furnished the first boom. Now it is irrigation, the building of dams to water the fertile plains. Gold in the High Atlas, copper, oil.

This should be of interest to Americans, in that by a peculiar diplomatic arrangement, Americans may work in Morocco as freely as at home, needing no papers other than an American passport. As far as I know, this the only place in the world where that is true.

There are difficulties. While the coastal climate is excellent, the desert inland is unbearable in summer. Civilization stops in foothills. The mountain people, Berbers, were not subdued by the Arabs in their thousand-year rule. The French and Legion troops have either "truce" or "trouble" relations with them. The mountains are rough, with few roads, snow in the upper reaches.

But there are great riches, too. The talk now centers on gold, cobalt, and copper. Who knows what else? The Atlas range is as unprospected as the Rockies were eighty years ago.

So there are two worlds in Morocco. The boom country. And the still-strong remnants of the Moorish Empire. The proud aristocrats in snowy turbans and flowing robes, riding white horses with high red leather saddles. (Much like cowboy saddles, by the way.) The curved knives worn openly, hanging from a rawhide thong around the neck. A land of great horsemen and fighters.

There's adventure waiting in Morocco. Excitement, trouble, hardships, wealth . . . As the ex-Legionnaire said, "Everything!"

As for me, I lived in New Jersey until seven years ago, and since have lived everywhere but the home state. Hopped from cap and gown into Navy blues at age 21. In the Navy was occupied mostly with landing craft. Went as far east as Naples, as far west as Okinawa.

Left the Navy married and armed with a typewriter. We decided there must be a better way to see the world than through a porthole. The typewriter was given the job of supporting us.

The going was thin at first, but to date about sixty stories have been published. Have lived in Mexico, Morocco, and France. At present we are holed up in Southern France, waiting for the arrival of junior, writing more stories, and trying to learn to speak French so people don't grind their teeth when we ask for a pack of butts.

FRED ALLHOFF'S story of the National Air Races at Cleveland employs a new setting for *Adventure*, we believe. Luckily, Mr. Allhoff had a top-notch adviser to aid him in working out the tech-

nical details of his exciting theme. But let's let him tell about it himself—

The air-race story really began years ago in Coral Gables when a nice-looking and likeable lad moved into an apartment adjoining mine. He was an ex-Golden Glover flying for A. T. C. at the time and the youngest-looking major I had ever seen. At war's end he wanted to try big plane racing and bought a surplus ship at a field out in Oklahoma for \$1500. As I recall, you had to buy 'em as is—and never mind about trying them out. The one he bought flew just far enough to make a return to the airport impossible and he came down in a plowed field hard enough to break his shoulder straps and sitting in the front half of a plane that had broken in two. He sold that one for what it was—junk. He kept right on wanting to fly in big-plane races, however and eventually acquired another ship of his own. He finished out of the money at the Miami Air Maneuvers, running out of gas on his final lap. The following year he failed to qualify for the Thompson at the National Air Races, but entered the Kendall. His jinx still held when his engine cut out in the fifth lap.

In 1948 he was back in Cleveland, still trying to win the granddaddy of them all—the Thompson Trophy Race. No jinx this time. He won it. His name—Anson L. "Johnny" Johnson.

We were no longer neighbors, both of us having moved from Coral Gables, but Johnny paid me a visit about five months later and I locked him in a bedroom with me and a typewriter, and the data for "Ice-water Pilot" (whose main character most definitely is *not* Johnny Johnson and whose race just as definitely is *not* the 1948 Thompson) was the result. There was another result. My cat had got shut in the room with us and, finding nothing to do about it, had her kittens in the wastebasket.

For whatever may be good about the story, considerable credit is due Johnny; for whatever is not—plus the kittens in the wastebasket—I cheerfully assume responsibility.

IN THIS issue—on page 98—you'll find an article on Western handguns by W. H. Griffey—the first of a series of three pieces on Western Weapons. The other two will appear in April and May. Mr. Griffey wrote us modestly that he hardly felt qualified to enter "that charmed circle around the *Camp-Fire*, amid the crowned heads of fictioneering." Well, that's mighty fine language, but there's always room at the blaze for a man who writes with the authority and interest that Mr. Griffey demonstrates. So let's open up the circle for a very welcome newcomer...

Born March 27, 1914 in Louisville, Kentucky . . . Scotch-Irish . . . decided to become a writer at age of 14 and began turning in English themes of blood-and-thunder tales . . . stepped out of High school into midst of Depression . . . got one term of college . . . hopped freights to seek work in hayfields for 50c a day . . . fire lanes in Southern California, cut trail and pulled ribs in tall timber country around Coeur d'Alene, Idaho . . . carpenter helper on construction job in desert near Boise . . . cleaned irrigation ditches and worked county roads in Columbia River valley near Pendleton, Oregon . . . tried house-to-house selling back in Louisville . . . caught in big flood of 1937 . . . collector-salesman for retail furniture store with 90% business in tough Blackbelt and smoketown districts for four years . . . Army nabbed me in June of 1941.

Basic training in machine gun company, assigned to 36th Division at Camp Bowie . . . met redhead Texas girl and came back on ten day furlough from Florida to marry . . . from maneuvers in Carolina was transferred into Ordnance Battalion at Fort Bragg. Moved to Fort Dix and got a chance to see New York City about which I had read much . . . shipped out in November, 1942, to make the landing in Casablanca . . . at Mostaganem, Algeria, got a transfer into Patton's I Armored Corps which became Headquarters 7th Army at Bizerte . . . ten months in Palermo, Sicily . . . back to North Africa for planning and under cover to Naples on an English ship . . . General Patch organizing cosmopolitan army and I thrilled at mixing with British troopers, Highlanders in kilts, Free French, Legionnaires, Gurkhas, Algerian and Moroccan tirailleurs, my old cafe pal from Casablanca (a knife-scarred Senegalese whose name I could never pronounce), Cubans, Canadians, and Australians. Even a platoon of natives from Madagascar! Big jump into Southern France at St. Tropez and up the Rhone Valley from town to town, getting stuck in Alsace-Lorraine for the winter . . . crossed the Rhine in March and was outside Munich when the war ended.

Got a week's furlough in London (took three more weeks going and coming) and greatly enjoyed Paris and London about which I had read a great deal . . . first thing I did in London was hunt for Sherlock Holmes' house on Baker street . . . spent four years and three months in Army and got out on 107 points and six battle stars, making sergeant somewhere along the way.

Back in Texas got into a Government Agency and managed to get some promotions and a transfer to the Central Office in Washington, D. C. This was exciting, got another promotion up there and ran my tongue out trying to see everything (how history lives in that city!) but since

home is owned in Fort Worth, and I like it better, resigned and came back. Been working night shift on the railroad in a local switchyards but just landed another Civil Service job which allows nights and Saturday for writing—what I want and need.

The three articles on Western Weapons grew out of research on short stories and the fact that I have read so many stories in which reference is made to these facts but no details ever given. I wanted to know the details and thought other readers might, so gathered a lot of notes around central characters, who were people I had known, for each.

The old gunsmith is a composite of several, one made throwing knives for me out of bayonets back when my street-corner gang had a shack on the Ohio, ran trotlines for catfish, and made home-brew for bargehands off the steamboats. The old rancher was an ex-Texas Ranger with whom I worked in the Government Agency. Sam was met in a hobo jungle over a can of beans. [You'll meet the rancher and Sam in Mr. Griffey's second and third articles.—Ed.]

HERE'S a man we're particularly anxious to have you meet. . . he writes almost as colorfully as he talks, as you'll see in a moment—and he's going to take over a new department in "Ask Adventure"—handling queries on Old Songs. He calls it "Songs of Campfire, Foc'sle and Bunkhouse" and we've a hunch it may turn out to be one of the most popular sections in our whole A. A. roster. We can't imagine anyone better equipped to handle it. . . but here's "Haywire Mac" to introduce himself to you in his own inimitable style—

Greetings, gang! And thanks for a seat at the *Camp-Fire*. Believe me, the honor is appreciated and whatever service I can render to any of you in my "specialty" will be given gladly.

In accordance with *Camp-Fire* tradition I submit, at editorial request, some bits of information about myself and background.

Born in Knoxville, Tenn., Oct. 8th, 1882. Ran away with a circus, Gentry Bros. Dog & Pony show, in 1896. After close of circus season I drifted around as a juvenile hobo, or "road kid," picking up a living by singing songs in saloons—or worse places.

Drifted around over quite a bit of territory—too young and too skinny to get into the Army for the Spanish War but did have a newspaper route in Chicamauga Park during summer of 1898. Hung around an old-time Army pack train and learned the rudiments of "muleology," enough to be hired and shipped to the

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Philippines as a buck packer; a civilian rating paying \$50 per month at that time.

Heard the whine of a lot of insurrecto lead and covered a lot of mileage on the roads and trails of Luzon and China—where I tagged along with the Relief Expedition in the Boxer Rebellion.

Shipped back to San Francisco in 1901 and started for home via boxcar, after "blowing in" on the Barbary Coast. Got as far as New Orleans—where I shipped on a Limey steamer loaded with mules for Rhodesia.

Worked a few months as "guard" or brakeman on the Mashonaland Railway running from Beira, in Portuguese East Africa to Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.

Quit and caught a coastwise steamer for Delagoa Bay; where I shipped as OS on a Limey square-rigger for Sydney, NSW. Jumped ship, which was expected of me, and knocked about in the back country until March, 1902.

In that month I grabbed a golden chance to ship as coal-passenger on a steamer hauling several hundred Aussies to London for the Coronation of King Edward VII.

I was not, needless to say, in Westminster Abbey when the Imperial Diadem was planted on Edward's tired brow—but I did see the parade. Probably the most magnificent ever staged in Britain and worth all the sweat and muscle I expended in getting there.

After the Big Show there were hundreds of world tramps trying to get out of London, Southampton and Liverpool. Tramped to Cardiff along with a Scotch donkey man and shipped as AB on a square-rigger for Buenos Aires. After several weeks on the beach I got a berth on a steamer for Philadelphia, leaving that city on a westbound Pennsy freight.

Started railroading at Wall Yard on the PRR—where I lasted four nights. Then I became a doorman in real earnest. Got a guitar and learned to plunk a few chords to accompany my songs—and that was my meal ticket between jobs.

There were no movies in those days, no radio and, of course, no television. The tramp musician and entertainer found the going easy, especially in the West. I whanged my git-fiddle and bellered my songs in saloons and honky-tonks from Butte to San Francisco and from Nogales to Nome.

I had picked up a few Negro work songs when I was a kid. I learned chanties and sailor songs at sea and I added cowboy ballads and hobo songs as I went along. In switch shanties and cabooses I learned railroad songs. I visited Goldfield, Tonopah, Bullfrog, Rhyolite and other Nevada camps, and managed to get myself in the clink in Fresno, California. Net profit was some jailhouse songs. "Stacko Lee," "Poor Boy," "Birmingham Jail" and others.

(Continued on page 124)

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(Continued from page 122)

I came up with quite a few songs of my own too. There was "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum." Another was "The Big Rock Candy Mountains"—the original version was no parlor song and I had to re-write and clean it up for radio in later years.

Sometime, with editorial permission, I'd like to tell you the story of these two ditties. [Go right ahead!—Ed.]

My rambling years were not all spent in singing to saloon audiences. I put in a lot of short hitches as brakeman or switchman on a lot of railroads, I wielded single-jack and muck stick in quartz mines, drove a freight team in the desert country, ran a hay ranch for a big cow outfit in Nevada and tramped with medicine shows and in small-time vaudeville.

Got into radio on WFRC, San Francisco, in 1925. Introduced the first cowboy band ever to face a mike and played theaters and dances all over northern California. Was signed up as a Victor recording artist in 1927 and my platters sold well.

I was featured on Columbia's Blue Monday Jamboree, on the Al Pearce show and with Meredith Willson. That's just a few of the high spots.

Started writing boomer yarns for *Railroad* magazine in 1938 and have sold same a flock of scripts since—not to mention newspaper feature stories and contributions to other publications.

Been married to the same understanding wife for thirty-five years, have a grown daughter with two sweet girls of her own. Wife and I live within a five minute walk of the beach, plenty of sport fishing handy and several friends have boats.

Dunno whether I'm through with show business or not. Last October I was invited to sing at the Pennsylvania Folk Festival in Philadelphia and there may be other engagements in that field. I'm a member of ASCAP, Songwriters Protective Association, Musician's Union and American Federation of Radio Artists.

—Harry Kirby McClintock,
otherwise "Haywire Mac."

HAVE you read the clever little short story on page 95? With "Russian Roulette" Don Stanford joins the ranks of our Writers' Brigade, and let's hope that next time he'll do us a longer yarn as interesting as this one. How do these guys get started pounding on that old typewriter anyway?... Well, Don tells us how it came about in his particular case—

My first published piece was an article in *Holiday* based on what can be done by starting with a canoe in mid-town Manhattan and hitch-hiking rides on barge tows

up the Hudson and Mohawk rivers and through the Erie Canal. That was several years ago, and I haven't been near a canoe since.

On the strength of it, though, I decided to become a full-time free-lance writer, and departed at once for Hollywood. Darned near starved, too, but at long last I got a start at writing screenplays and began to sell magazine fiction. I've now had novels and short stories published in Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Sweden, Denmark and the British Empire as well as in several U. S. magazines, and in spite of the creeping paralysis of the checkbook which is the writer's occupational disease I intend to go right on with it.

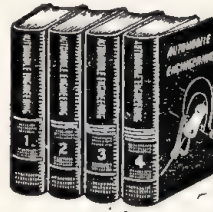
For avocations, I guess I'd list horses—Western horses—first, with sports cars second and such pastimes as tennis and skiing following when I can fit 'em in. I am also addicted to barbershop harmony, but my idea of a real good life is holing up for the Winter on an Arizona dude ranch with my M. G. two-seater and a type-writer, and not doing any more work than is absolutely necessary.

PROBABLY one of the toughest narratives to turn out without knowing your subject from actual personal experience is the animal story. Harold Cruickshank (see "Death's Black Shadow"—page 104) knows his stuff and, consequently, gets across to the rest of us the feeling of the wilderness and the creatures that live there—

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to study the wild life creatures of which I write so much, first hand . . . In 1906 I came to Alberta, Canada with my father and an older brother, to homestead, pioneer. Among the first settlers in the wild bush country, a country teeming with wild life of every type, it was not long before I began to get acquainted and so commence to build up background for my fiction and fact stories in this field.

I hunted, trapped, a great deal. Naturally, in a wild, unsettled wilderness country, one runs into many dramatic situations. For instance, one of my early experiences was to be charged and bayed by a large muledeer buck—a most frightening experience but just one of a number.

My first day, actually, in the wilds, I was shot in the cheekbone by my brother, a nasty situation since, after a trek of about thirty miles over and through muskeg, and bush, we found no medical aid, not even a drop of iodine, but I survived, to be shot at many times later when I served with the Canadian Infantry in World War I. The Germans did succeed in nicking me.



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I worked in the woods, on railroad construction work—all tough, trying jobs but jobs that helped build up a solid background for the many adventure stories I have written in the past 26 years or so. Although I do many types of fiction stories, Westerns, adventures and the like, I must confess that my favorites are the animal, wildlife yarns.

I have sold millions of words of copy in the animal story field, but I state, without reservation, that I am extremely happy at last to be in this issue of *Adventure*.

Always one who believes that in order to give the ring of realism to an adventure yarn, its author should have had close contact with his subjects—his color, his atmosphere, his characters—I hope that my otter story may give all *Adventure's* readers this smack of realism.

SPEAKING of animals—their habits and behavior—Paul Annixter's story about the baboons, in this issue, struck us as pretty amazing. But the author of "The Man the Baboons Knew" has this brief comment to make on what happens in his unusual tale of South Africa—

I can assure you that baboons would be quite capable of the emotions and actions ascribed to them in the story. "One for all and all for one" is baboon code, as any Africander will testify, and a chacma tribe will avenge the injury or death of one of their number, no matter what the strength of the enemy. Experienced hunters will walk up lions in brush rather than enter a baboon city.

MOUNTAIN climbing is one of those hazardous pursuits which has a strange fascination for a lot of us who don't quite understand it, never expect to have a chance to try it and probably wouldn't if we could. E. C. Tovey, who contributes the one poem on this subject—"Men and the Mountain" (page 41)—points out that the last line of the poem is the classic reply of George Leigh Mallory, the great mountaineer, when he was asked why he felt impelled to risk his life for the intangible rewards of mountain-climbing. Mallory later disappeared forever in the swirling mists, close to the summit of the world's highest known mountain, on the 1924 Everest expedition. —K.W.G.



(Continued from page 40)

Tangier, and with you alive I can't come back. But I'll put you to sleep until I'm gone." He swung the heavy sword in a short arc. Juan ducked but it caught him behind the ear. He slumped down heavily and there were no more cries for mercy.

Jake went and scooped up his three thousand dollars from where Ahmed had thrown the money. He turned and ran out to the door, opened it and was in the fresh night air of the Rue de Seville. He began running down the street, his robes flapping wildly. He pulled them up like skirts, and all his fierce released energy flowed to his legs and he raced through the deserted stone streets.



THE Cafe Langouste was a narrow, fly-specked place on the waterfront. Jake did not go in. Panting, his throat like sandpaper, he peered in from the darkness.

Madeline was sitting there at a table, the luggage on a chair next to her. Her head was low, and her hands gripped the glass of vermouth tightly.

Smiling, Jake turned away. He ran to the next street, to a parapet, the top of a wall that sloped down into the harbor. At the end of the sea wall he could see a ship, a glitter of lights in the darkness out there. Even as he watched he heard a steel hatch pontoon clang into place. They would be going soon. And he and Madeline would be on board.

To a new world. To a place in the mountains of Central America where they didn't know blacklists. They only knew horses and coffee bushes. Madeline would like that. She wouldn't be waiting in the Cafe Langouste, otherwise.

Jake tore off his burnoose and threw it over the parapet. The sword he took in his hands. He looked at it, the jewels dazzling even now.

"Here, Mulai Ismail," he said. "You can have the damn dirty thing back again!" He lifted it above his head, swung it wide and heaved it with all his strength out into the harbor.

It glittered twice in turning. Then the splash. Jake grinned and squared his shoulders. Then he turned and ran toward the Cafe Langouste.

THE END

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(Continued from page 94)

with the broken line of cattle—Johnny's tail-riders. Forward movement in the lead and swing had almost stopped, but the flank and drag were still shambling ahead to close the gap. Cattle were lying down up there—a dangerous thing. Had the crew deserted the herd?

Muldoon hurried to Frank Wilson. "What's wrong up yonder, boy?"

Wilson pulled his bandanna down from his face. "Plenty, boss. Buck Condon come and rode from drag to point, a raisin' hell with everybody. The boys are quittin'—all but me and Bob."

Suddenly, Johnny realized how tired he was—bone tired, plumb worn out in body and spirit. And then . . . *The herd has got to get through* . . . He straightened in the saddle, lifted his reins. "Keep 'em on their feet, Frank. With the shape they're in, if they get down it'll be damned hard to get 'em up." He rode on.

The Lazy O crew was grouped in a ragged circle, Condon on the far side. When Muldoon approached they fell silent. The nearest riders moved their horses to make room for him so that he confronted the trail boss with no one between them. He swept a quick glance around, saw only hostility on their haggard and sullen faces. Here was trouble in the raw. The life of the herd was at stake. Johnny wasn't tired now.

Buck Condon burst out, "Time you was showin' up! You're to blame for the mess I'm in. You cost me ten of my best steers and now my boys are fixin' to quit on me. You're fired! Git!"

Muldoon felt no surge of temper and none appeared on the surface of him. He had a job to do—a dangerous job demanding a cool head, for Buck Condon was reputed to be a bad man with a gun. Quietly, Johnny asked, "How d'you figure I'm to blame?"

The faces around him showed high scorn for his mild manner and a few men cursed in disgust.

"You signaled to split the herd!" growled Condon. "If it had come ahead like I wanted we'd a had enough men there to shove 'em away from the alkali. So you're to blame! Now, git!"

A young fellow spoke up—Doke Rankin, wild and reckless and plenty tough,

but a fine hand. "I ain't sayin' that you're to blame for them alkalied steers, Muldoon, but you've dealt this outfit a heap of misery. Condon was bad enough before you come, then you show him how little he knows about drivin' cattle and he gets worse. He chouses the hell out'n you and you're too yaller to do anything about it. Makes him figure he can run it over the balance of us thataway. We're a fixin' to show him he can't. You can trail along with us, but you'll be sleepin' in your own blankets."

Sleeping in his own blankets! An out-cast, unfit to trail with his own breed of men. The other hands muttered their approval of Rankin's condemnation.

Skin stretched tightly over the bones of Johnny Muldoon's sunken cheeks and his icy eyes had crawled farther back into his head. He ignored Rankin's insults. He had a job to do. Cold-bloodedly, he went about it.

His voice was low, level and almost impersonal. "It's time you were riding, Condon. You ain't fit to handle men and cattle. I'm taking over this herd. Go and get your bedding and ride, *you lying son-of-a-dog!*"

Surprise and amazement for an instant stayed the hand of death. Then it struck. Two six-shooters roared, one a shade ahead of the other. Men cursed. Horses pranced and reared in gunsmoke. Buck Condon was flung back in his saddle. The muzzle of his gun sagged, then came up with an effort. Coldly, Muldoon shot him again—finished the job he had to do. Condon's horse whirled. He plunged lifeless to the ground.

Johnny Muldoon blew smoke from the barrel of his six-shooter and holstered it. He crossed his hands on the horn of his saddle and looked at each man in turn.

"If you want your time now, boys," he said in friendly fashion, "best I can do is to give you an order on Louie Schultz."

"Time, hell!" barked Rankin. "I'll lick the man that even *looks* like he wants his time!" The others profanely declared they felt the same way about it.

Johnny Muldoon's weary shoulders straightened a trifle. "All right, fellas. We're Colorado bound and nine miles from water. Line 'em out!"

THE END

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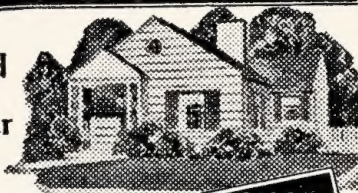
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"FINEST MADE"

(Continued from page 73)

think Cole meant to cut me off. And I don't think I could have won if he hadn't. He had too much power for me."

They were in a crowded little office in the stands and they decided, then, that Jimmy Cole had won the Thompson and the officials left, and there were just Skeet and Tony Wood and Jake. Jimmy Cole shook hands with Skeet and tried to say something and his lips moved, but no sound came. Skeet grinned and went out.

When Jimmy Cole got his speaking voice back again, he said, "I had best time for five laps, they tell me. I'd like to give the five hundred to the fund for Jerry Walker's widow, if it's not too late."

"It's not too late," said Tony Wood. "What do you plan to do with the sixteen thousand?"

Jimmy Cole flushed.

"I'm not trying to throw a harpoon into you again, but I can't answer that." He added—knowing, miserably, that it explained nothing. "It's—well, it's a personal matter."

"Not as personal as you may think," Tony said. "I got the Sonny Dawson story and the wire services have it, so everybody's in the act. And the Hollandville *Herald's* editor is even now arranging a 'welcome back' celebration. Says you're a hero."

Jimmy Cole turned sharply to Jake. Jake chomped his cud and shook his head indignantly.

"I dug the story out all by myself," Tony Wood went on. "And one hell of a fine story it is, too—" he grinned slowly—"even to a lousy, hardboiled newspaperman."

Jimmy Cole looked at Tony and back to Jake, and in his eyes was a strange expression for the bitter, defiant outcast they had known. Jake touched Tony's arm and jerked his head at the door.

As they went out, Jake began closing the door behind them and took a brief look back into the room.

Jimmy Cole had peeled off the black gloves. He was sitting there now, staring at the scar tissue covering his naked hands. He was smiling.

Jake shut the door. A man needed privacy now and then.

THE END

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